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THE CASTILIAN

BY

DON TELESFORO DE TRUEBA Y COSÍO,

AUTHOR OF "GOMEZ ARIAS."

Let 'em call it mischief :
When it is past and prosper'd, 'twill be virtue.
BEN JONSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CHAPTER I.

THE DILEMMA.

Es possible, Señor, que la fortuna
Nos mire tan adversa, que vencidos
Peligros tan inmensos, parecia
Que fuese à amanecer un claro día
Y en nuevo horror nos remos sumergidos.

LA HORMESINDA. MORATIN.

OVERPOWERED with fatigue, and exhausted by his feelings, Don Pedro had insensibly fallen into a deep, though unquiet slumber. Ferran de Castro had enjoyed a feverish repose, but the

tumult of his mind, at once of an alarming and pleasing nature, had not allowed him an interval of refreshing sleep: nor did he endeavour to court its influence; the safety of the king was next his heart; and though, in the present instance, he feared neither pursuit nor treachery, he was every moment starting up to ascertain if every thing were safe.

Three times he had already risen, and drawing towards the ponderous casement, surveyed the prospect round. The country lay buried in awful darkness—no sound of advancing troops was to be heard, and Ferran again threw himself upon his couch, in anxious expectation of the morning. His mind was in a state of restless excitement; for he hailed as certain the accomplishment of his ardent wishes—of hopes, too long deferred. Nothing now impeded his union with Costanza; chance had unexpectedly united the objects most dear to each other; the king approved and even desired their marriage, and Don Egas could no longer object to it—or,

even if the event were in any degree opposed to the secret wishes of his heart, he carefully concealed his scruples so long as Don Pedro honoured his dwelling with his presence.

The Castilian, accordingly, never suffered a doubt of his approaching happiness to cloud the brilliant prospects that opened on his view. He encouraged the pleasing illusions, though now and then a deep sigh would escape him, and afford a mournful contrast, as the heavy, but disturbed breathing of the king fell upon his ear. Then a train of gloomy thoughts would momentarily darken his fondest anticipations, and he bitterly blamed his heart, for welcoming the whispers of happiness, whilst his sovereign continued exposed to all the perils of unrelenting fate. In this alternate succession of pleasing and melancholy ideas, the Castilian spent the long and tedious night. The moon at length rose, and spread a more cheering aspect over the surrounding country. Don Ferran sat

absorbed in a gentle reverie, when he was suddenly startled by a noise at the gate of the castle, and he fancied he heard the buzz of human voices. The sound awakened a thousand fears in his bosom, and he sprung from his couch, about to ascertain the truth of his suspicions, when his course was arrested by the sudden appearance of Pimiento. The old escudero burst into the apartment, with evident signs of alarm, and his master no longer doubted that some fresh calamity was at hand.

“We are lost,” cried Pimiento, in a tone of despair: “they are come—the rebels, the blood-hounds, have scented out our course!”

“Hold, good friend,” said the Castilian, “thy terror surely magnifies the danger—the entrance, you must be aware, has been strongly secured. This place is not destitute of concealed retreats, and the king may safely escape the vigilance of the traitors.”

Don Pedro suddenly awoke, and started upon his feet; he cast around a wild glance of

mixed alarm and fury, and fiercely grasping his sword, advanced towards Don Ferran.

“Am I pursued?—has the pusillanimous Don Egas betrayed me?” he inquired, in an agitated tone.

“Let your highness be composed,” calmly returned the Castilian; “we have nought to apprehend; it appears, indeed, that some straggling party of rebels has approached the castle, but we have no proof that the object of their visit is the capture of your person. Let us attribute their coming to any thing rather than treasonable information: and with regard to Don Egas de Vargas, weak though he be, and pliable in his principles, yet I know him incapable of so dastardly and enormous a crime as that of violating the laws of hospitality, in the person of his sovereign lord and master.”

Don Pedro fixed his expressive eyes on his faithful companion, and a ghastly smile curled the corner of his proud lip, as in the bitterness of his soul, he muttered—

“Don Ferran—Don Ferran, I will trust no man ; sad lessons of experience have taught me to look upon every one I see as an enemy. Let the villains approach, if fall I must into their power ; but it will not be alive : no—the bastard may possess himself of the person of his lawful and betrayed sovereign, but it will only be when unconscious and incapable of feeling his degradation, and the contumelies of the vile and fratricidal traitor. Stand by me, you who are alone worthy of the name of Castilians, and let the slaughter of many rebels grace the downfall of Don Pedro !”

His rage became ungovernable ; the sense of wrong, and offended majesty, was paramount to every other consideration. Rejecting the possibility of effecting an escape, with dauntless resolution he made up his mind to wreak his vengeance upon his pursuers. The violent temper of the king always impelled him to adopt desperate measures ; the idea of self-preservation was with him always a secondary

matter. His first impulse was that of an angry and overpowering nature. Happily, his faithful Ferran, with that austere coolness which marked his character, and which was the effect of constitution, no less than of the consciousness of upright purpose, was near at hand, and made use of the ascendancy which he alone possessed over the mind of the afflicted king. He inculcated lessons of prudence, and suggested instant concealment in their perilous situation.

“Don Pedro,” he added, with a firm voice, “you surely cannot resolve to afford a triumph to our enemies by opposing, when we have not the power of subduing them. No, no, Señor, you must not thus madly yield the crown of Castile, while there remains the slightest chance of retaining its possession.”

These words operated strongly upon the mind of the king; the idea of his lost crown—the crown adorning the head of his hated brother—recalled, like a magic spell, his attention from

the impulse of fierce vengeance which had lately blinded his better judgment.

“Yield the crown!” he muttered in a deep tone of indignation; “no, no, by this good sword I swear, I will preserve it at all hazards—ay, bid me cringe to some of my detested rebellious subjects—let me suffer in body and in mind, all the agonies that can afflict human nature—let me forego every prerogative to which I am entitled—but, oh! may Heaven never permit the abomination of seeing Don Pedro of Castile humbled before this rebel Trastamara, and the throne of his ancestors occupied by an usurper and a bastard. But,” he added, with a bitterly composed smile, “Don Pedro can never behold the blasting sight; death will spare him such cruel torture.”

He seemed to feel a gloomy satisfaction in this dismal conviction, and to acquire fresh confidence and tranquillity. Meanwhile, the party at the entrance of the castle had become clamo-

rous for admittance, and a delay in complying with their wishes might tend to strengthen their suspicions. Of this danger the provident Don Egas was fully sensible, and accordingly, scarcely had he been awakened by the summons, and ascertained its origin, than he hurried to the king in trepidation, at once for the safety of his royal guest, and that of his humbler entertainer.

“Heaven defend us!” cried the old cavalier, as he entered, “the castle is surrounded by the soldiers of Trastamara.”

“By traitors!” indignantly interposed Don Pedro.

“Well, Señor,” continued Don Egas, “the castle is surrounded, and, to avoid suspicion, the gates must be thrown open to the invaders, for we cannot defend them. Don Pedro, you must be aware of the danger of my situation, and you surely cannot contemplate my ruin with indifference.”

“Enough, enough,” cried the king, contemptuously, “I have always admired your prudence, and can find no fault with your present solicitude. Begone, Señor, and open the gates as soon as it may suit your good pleasure.”

“My liege,” returned Don Egas, somewhat re-assured, “God knows it would greatly gratify me to be enabled to sustain a siege, but, in the present posture of affairs, such an attempt would be madness. We have neither men nor arms at command, and a pacific arrangement is now our only alternative.”

“Pacific arrangement !” quoth the wondering Pimiento, “what mean you, Señor, by arrangement? Heaven forgive me, but your words bring strange ideas to my mind: you surely do not intend to betray your lawful king, in order to save your own person and goods from the rage of those noisy traitors? Look you, Señor Don Egas, such pacific arrangements will not pass current here.”

“Hold, thou graceless fool,” said Don Egas ;

“what new absurdity hast thou imagined, to add to our dilemma?”

“No absurdity,” cried Pimiento, proudly ; “for shame, Señor ! have you forgotten your ancestors? Is it thus Don Garci Perez de Vargas would have acted?—would Don Vasco have thought of such a thing?—when did the Cid or Martin Pelaez lend themselves to such dastardly acts, as that of yielding up their king to his enemies?”

“The man is mad,” observed the old cavalier; then, turning to Don Pedro, he continued— “Surely, Señor, you cannot suppose Don Egas de Vargas capable of so vile a crime; I hold your safety at heart, Don Pedro, but this is in no manner compromised by giving entrance to your enemies into the castle. I have already acquainted you with the secret of that wainscot.”

Saying this, he advanced to the wall; he pressed hard against it—a concealed spring

gave way, and discovered a narrow aperture which led to a passage.

“There,” proceeded Don Egas, “you may remain in concealment; the passage communicates with a subterraneous way, leading to a private door in the back of the castle; you can by this means get a free egress from the place.”

“And, I suppose, meanwhile you will engage yourself to make my pursuers drunk,” said Don Pedro, between vexation and jest; “for if they have surrounded the castle, I cannot well perceive how your wise plan is to be carried into execution.”

The tumult at the gate was now so great, that Don Egas became proportionably alarmed, and invited the king to enter the secret passage.

“Begone, Señor,” said Don Pedro, proudly; “attend to your safety, and leave the care of mine to those who yet feel interested in the misfortunes of their king. Throw open the gates of the castle—I am prepared for all contingencies.”

Don Egas made a very profound obeisance, and withdrew. "The old sycophant will not betray me," observed Don Pedro, as if doubting the honour of his *quondam* courtier.

Ferran de Castro cast a melancholy look on the open passage, as if inviting Don Pedro to avail himself of that last resource; but the king, who understood his meaning, seemed to shrink from the proffered concealment. He had grown excessively suspicious; and, besides, there was something repugnant to his haughty nature in thus flying from the face of rebels.

"Ferran, my friend," he said, in a gloomy tone, "dost thou advise me to accept this miserable refuge?"

"Alas! Señor," replied the Castilian, "it is the only one now left us; for the honour of Don Egas I can pledge myself."

"And yet," continued the king, musing, "they will search the castle, and should they discover my concealment—oh! horror! my dis-

grace would be tenfold, and my power of resistance vain."

The gates of the castle had now been flung open, and the king heard with a start the joyous clamour with which some of the party hurried in. There was no time for deliberation, the danger was pressing, and a resolution became imperious. Happily the apartment was in a sequestered angle of the castle, and many other chambers would undergo a scrutiny before they reached this place.

Whilst this was passing, it will not be improper to transport our readers to another scene in the castle. The party of soldiers had rushed in impetuously, in expectation of securing the prize for which they were toiling. During the night they had been apprised of the direction which the fugitive had taken, by Pardillo, who had narrowly watched every movement of Pimiento, in whose chivalric zeal, and misplaced humanity, the present dilemma of Don Pedro

originated. So soon as such valuable information had been obtained, a strong party of horsemen had been sent forwards. Not, however, being so well acquainted with the turnings and by-ways of the country, they had been unable to arrive at the castle till break of day. Still, the hopes of the party were very sanguine; they knew the utter hopelessness in which Don Pedro now found himself of effecting a defence, and they naturally concluded he would be easily captured in his retreat. Indeed the country round was covered with detachments of the army of Don Enrique. Towns and villages were hourly declaring themselves in his favour. Nothing but a chance, next to an impossibility, could prevent the unhappy king from falling into the power of his pursuers.

Under this impression they entered the castle of Don Egas de Vargas. This provident cavalier was much puzzled how to conduct himself in his present delicate situation. Of course he had already determined to receive his new

guests with every demonstration of hospitality ; but he was rather sceptical with regard to the interpretation which might be given to this shew of friendly welcome. He could not disguise from his mind, however willing on all occasions to bow humbly to the will of the strongest, that his political apostacies had been so frequent, that people, even of great latitude in political interpretation, might be disposed to pay little regard to his last conversion.

However, Don Egas was allowed little time to indulge in these perplexing speculations. The boisterous entrance, or rather invasion, of the insolent soldiers, checked his reflections, and called all his practical diplomacy into play. As the gates were thrown open, he very ceremoniously stood in the middle of the hall, surrounded by his servants, in the attitude of one eager to discharge all the rules of hospitality. But this show of good feeling, did not meet with a suitable return.

“ *Ira de Dios !* ” cried a tall, swarthy man, of

most sinister appearance, who seemed to be the leader of the crew—"Señor Castellano, we were getting tired of enjoying the morning breeze at the gates of your fortress. It is well, by Santiago, you thought it advisable to open them at last to the faithful followers of our good king, Don Enrique. Had you delayed a few moments longer, God knows what fine morning salutation we had in store for the castle and you too."

"Señor Soldado," replied Don Egas, with dignified composure, "methinks you have yet no reason to complain of our regard for the followers of the King Don Enrique. You arrive at the castle at an unseasonable hour. Myself and all my vassals were immersed in sleep; a short delay, therefore, in affording welcome, augurs no want of zeal or sincerity upon our parts."

"Fair words!" quoth the soldier, with a grin. "We shall see presently how far your good works agree with your professions. And first of all, Señor, prepare to deliver into our

hands every key of chamber, room, cellar, tower, in fine of every hole and lurking place of this most suspicious of all mansions. Our chief will arrive in a few moments, and of course he will expect to find us pretty far advanced in our royal chase. We know that the fox has sought refuge here, but he is followed by dogs of a miraculous scent. And, do you hear, Señor, it will be as easy for him to escape, as for you to persuade us that you are a true friend to our good King Don Enrique—God bless him !”

“ I know not,” said the old cavalier, with an assumption of indignant pride, “ that Don Enrique has given power to any who call themselves his followers, to insult noble cavaliers in their own mansions. Until you have positive proof to back your insinuations, you have no right to impeach my regard for the king Don Enrique, or my readiness to comply with what be deemed necessary to his service. Here, Moral,” he added, turning to one of his attendants, “ deliver the keys to this man, and let

the search be commenced as soon as may be thought meet ; let them take this useless trouble, since it suits their good pleasure ; for my part I rest content in my innocence and well known attachment to Don Enrique de Trastamara.”

Don Egas had assumed a degree of boldness and assurance, proportionate to the imminency of the danger at hand. He was by no means divested of personal courage, and the speculative shrewdness of his mind naturally pointed out the method he ought to adopt on the present occasion. He himself conducted the search through the various windings of the castle, having given orders to all his men to follow him, that Don Enrique’s party might rest satisfied there was no intention of effecting any underhand escape. Don Egas felt perfectly at rest as to the impossibility of discovering the secret spring, and the passage where his royal guest lay concealed. Of the fidelity of his own men, he entertained not the least suspicion ; he knew their decided attachment to the fallen king, and

his misfortunes had created that sympathy which shrinks from the idea of treachery, were the mind prone to indulge it. However, to make assurance doubly sure, he very prudently kept them continually in his eye, to prevent any intercourse with the soldiers, which might prove dangerous. Thus, by this skilful manœuvre, he at once removed from his mind every apprehension, and afforded the soldiers a proof of his candour and sincerity.

Whilst these proceedings were going on in the hall of the castle, Costanza, in an agony of alarm and anxiety, sat in her apartment, accompanied by her women, in hourly expectation of some misfortune. She had been startled from her slumbers by the arrival of the soldiers. Alas! the charm of the most rapturous dream had been rudely broken by the unequivocal sound of dreaded reality. She had revelled in the pleasing visions of her approaching union with the object of her heart's warmest adoration. Her mind was attuned to all the soft suggestions of happiness and delight; the

all-absorbing interest of her affection had banished from her delightful slumbers all more remote ideas of the dangers which surrounded Don Pedro, and consequently her lover. The bustle occasioned by the unexpected arrival of the pursuers, soon dispelled the enchanting but baseless fabric of her happiness.

Costanza awakened her female attendants, who slept in the adjoining chamber, and whose slumbers being less feverish and less impassioned, were consequently more profound. They arose then with that peculiar ill-humour which possesses most people when they happen to be roused untimely from deep and pleasant repose. The cause of the bustle in the castle was soon ascertained; the fears of Costanza redoubled—she trembled for the safety of the guests; she earnestly wished to be near the scene of action, for there is an undefinable sensation which pervades any one interested in the fate of a friend, that, by his presence, the peril surrounding him might in some way be averted. Yet female deli-

cacy forbade the daughter of Don Egas to quit her chamber at that hour, amidst the scene of riot and confusion to be expected from soldiers who had entered the castle more in the attitude of invading foes than friends.

In all its anxiety, however, the mind of Costanza received a soothing beam of hope, from the knowledge of her father's masterly policy in warding off blows of impending danger; and as she knew the existence of the secret passage communicating with the apartment, she confided in the security of this concealment in case of emergency; yet her mind was in a turmoil of excitation, which she strove in vain to appease.

Meantime the disorderly soldiers continued their search, but with little probability of success. Their savage spite and ill humour were thus doubly augmented; the most recondite recesses and holes were strictly ransacked, but to no purpose. They had not yet arrived at the remote part which contained the secret chamber, when, to carry on their meritorious labour with

more alacrity, they very freely began to honour the wine of the old cavalier with most tremendous libations. Don Egas, who beheld the miraculous thirst of his new visitors, was more pleased than offended, firmly confiding in the universally received maxim, that the generous juice has no particular virtue in clearing men's understandings. Thus every additional bowl that Don Egas saw swallowed by the insatiate soldiers, he considered as a step gained towards the security of his royal guest.

“A good health!” cried the ferocious serjeant, half reeling, “to our most gracious king Don Enrique.”

Don Egas, being a thorough well-bred gentleman, could not think of being wanting in courtesy, and accordingly drank the proposed health. Indeed the operation was gone through with such good grace and apparent sincerity, that the soldiers, already inclined to jollity and good humour, by the aid of their libations, began to relax their brutal severity, and to look upon the

old cavalier with more regard. De Vargas naturally enough lost no opportunity of improving this friendly turn of affairs, and happily he was endowed with that accommodating disposition that knows too well how to adapt itself to existing circumstances. He was inwardly congratulating himself upon his deep policy, in thus securing the person of Don Pedro from harm, and at the same time appearing attached to the cause of Trastamara.

This conduct on the part of Don Egas, may seem, to less courtly personages, to savour too much of despicable servility; whereas it only evinced, in his own view of the case, that he was of a most benevolent disposition, and, moreover, very desirous of offending no man.

CHAPTER II.

SELF-DEVOTION.

Among the faithless, faithful only he ;
Among innumerable false, unmoved ;
Unshaken, unseduced, untterrify'd,
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal,
Nor number nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind.

MILTON.

IN this posture of affairs the flattering air-built castles of the old cavalier received a most violent concussion, and nearly fell. The shock originated in the arrival of a fresh and numerous party of soldiers, who suddenly made their appearance in the castle, and who, not having

yet enjoyed their morning draught, were very willing, upon the same terms, to continue the search which had been suspended by the libations of their comrades. Don Egas looked on this reinforcement with any feelings but those of hospitality. As his anxiety and vexation increased, he very naturally made up for his inward discontent by a superabundance of smiles and words of welcome. He was suddenly, however, spell-bound, and unable to conceal his agitation, when, in the midst of his hospitable duties, his look fell upon the chief of the party, no other than Don Alvar de Lara. Don Egas had seldom been so taken by surprise, and his ready invention in finding out compliments and framing excuses, wholly failed him. In vain he attempted to utter some words of friendly welcome; the rebellious and spiteful words would not come at his bidding—most provokingly sticking in his throat, notwithstanding the wide and ponderous jaws that opened to give them free egress.

In this emergency, he essayed to supply the

welcome: he attempted a smile, but, owing to the unnatural position of the risible faculties, the smile degenerated into a dismal grin. Even his bows seemed to have conspired against him, for as he was making a very profound one, by some unlucky turn his arms came in contact with a soldier, who not being at the time over sober, lost his centre of gravity, and measured the ground—a feat which produced no small laughter and confusion.

These several mischances, so near upon one another, were little calculated to restore the good host's composure; in fact they completely deranged every idea he had still left, and he stood for a few seconds in a state of perplexity that baffled all description. Don Alvar de Lara appeared to enjoy his embarrassment; he fixed a proud and contemptuous look on the abashed cavalier, and for some time he prolonged his misery by silence.

“Don Egas,” he at length said, with a sar-

donic smile, "my arrival at this castle seems to have excited unusual amazement : and yet, from the favours which I owe you, it was to be supposed that I should avail myself of the earliest opportunity to testify my gratitude. You see, Señor, I have not been wanting in courtesy to pay my respects, and become your guest."

"And you are right welcome, Señor," answered Don Egas, happy to find a clue to get out a word—"the hospitality of this castle shall be ever open to you ; my only regret is that the mansion is hardly dignified enough to receive so noble and generous a cavalier."

"You flatter me, Señor Don Egas de Vargas," replied Lara, with a significant smile ; "this mansion is worthy of receiving *kings*, much more a simple cavalier "

"Kings !" exclaimed the wily courtier, affecting agreeable surprise : "surely Don Enrique does not intend to honour my humble mansion with his royal and august presence ?"

“And if he were so disposed,” retorted Lara, “it would not be the first time it had been honoured by sovereigns.”

“I am proud to say it would not,” readily and undauntedly replied Don Egas—“for it is a tradition in our family, that the saintly king, Don Fernando, in his progress to the conquest of Seville, sojourned a day in this very castle.”

Provoked by the happy readiness of Don Egas, in warding off his innuendos, Don Alvar de Lara could no longer continue the sarcastic tone he had adopted. He threw away every appearance of disguise, and in an angry voice exclaimed: “Señor Don Egas de Vargas, it is needless to trifle any longer: I come to your castle as an enemy, and as such you must regard me;—further ceremony is idle—of my private wrongs I will not speak, when others of a more grievous and more important nature claim prior attention. Your arts of dissimulation, your consummate hypocrisy, are no longer of any avail. I come to require the immediate surrender of

the tyrant of Castile, whom I am perfectly convinced is this very moment concealed in one of the retreats of this mansion."

"Don Alvar de Lara," proudly replied Don Egas, with perfect composure, "your taunts and your insolent demeanour, to a nobleman in his own domain, I scorn to resent; whatever suspicions may militate against me, they surely cannot justify this gross behaviour, towards a fellow nobleman and a kinsman, in Don Alvar de Lara. If Don Pedro had really taken refuge in my castle, you certainly could not expect, nor command, that a Castilian nobleman should so basely infringe the laws of hospitality, as to deliver up his guest, however obnoxious he might be, into the hands of his pursuers."

This firm and noble answer in no manner surprised Don Alvar, even from the lips of Don Egas; for, however pliable in his principles, the duties of hospitality were at that time considered so sacred, that the smallest deviation from them

would have covered the author of the offence with an indelible stain. The bare suspicion of such treason, therefore, was enough to arouse the indignant feelings of any nobleman, however latitudinarian in his political principles.

“Enough,” said Alvar in a decided tone; “you must now, Don Egas, be pleased to follow me, in my strict search after the tyrant—are all your servants here?”

“They are,” resolutely replied the old cavalier.

“Follow me,” he then said, imperiously waving his hand. “Perchance, your bold bearing may not last long;—ay! the mysteries of this castle are not so inscrutable as you imagine, and my knowledge and activity may fairly counterpoise your deep-tried cunning.”

Don Egas de Vargas soon perceived the perilous situation in which he was placed. The confident tone of Don Alvar excited in his mind a strong sensation of alarm. From the former habits of friendly intimacy, existing between the

Laras and the Vargas, and the position in which Don Alvar had stood with regard to Costanza, the visits of the young cavalier to this castle had been frequent. He had enjoyed many opportunities of being initiated in some of its intricacies, and though the secret panel had always remained unknown to every one but the owner or his delegate, yet, from various circumstances, Lara strongly suspected whereabouts the concealed retreat existed. With this impression, and confident of success, he proceeded along the vaulted galleries and sombre corridors, which resounded mournfully with the echo of the soldiers' footsteps; none spoke, and the gloom of those old passages, dimly illumined by the sun's rays, tended to excite a prediction of some impending misfortune. Don Egas felt strange misgivings, yet in his features he strove to display that confidence and tranquillity which he no longer felt. In this manner they reached a chamber at the extremity of a gallery; it was fastened.

“This must be opened, Don Egas,” said Alvar de Lara.

“It is the private apartment of my daughter,” observed her father.

“It must be opened !” sternly repeated Don Alvar. Don Egas made no further remonstrance, but called aloud to his daughter to unbar the door. It was done ; Don Alvar entered with a few attendants ; Costanza stood motionless with astonishment ; a feeling of aversion and dread crept over her—a dismal weight fell on her heart—a dense vapour seemed to obscure her mind, and blast every cheering prospect. The arrival of her discarded lover, the unexpected meeting with the passionate and vindictive Lara, seemed to augur some impending catastrophe fatal to her future peace. Costanza shuddered ; she felt as if her fate was on the point of being irrevocably decided : yet bitter as were her feelings, and gloomy the thoughts that now presented themselves, she yielded not to the feebleness of womanly fears, nor did she lose

that innate dignity of deportment, which had never forsaken her on the most trying occasions. She rose from her seat, and, with cold courtesy, returned the obeisance of the young cavalier. A noble gravity was impressed on her beautiful features. The flush of the rose had forsaken her cheek, but the modest pale tint which succeeded it, rather added to the imposing expression of her whole appearance.

Lara stood rooted to the spot ; the splendid vision that was presented to his view, dispelled at once the various feelings of revenge, anger, and ambition, by which he was actuated. One powerful, absorbing sensation, of ill extinguished love, took possession of him, and the stirring scenes of war and death, the perilous adventures, the hair-breadth escapes, the deep plots in which he had been engaged, were all unable to efface from his heart the warm impression of his first attachment, or banish from his memory the surpassing beauties of the object before him. Its sudden reappearance, rekindled with new

force every particle of that flame which had never been wholly extinguished. For some moments he seemed to forget the purpose of his mission, in the contemplation of the beautiful Costanza. But the passions and feelings of Alvar de Lara were too violent to permit any one of them to absorb exclusive attention. They clashed fiercely ; the recollection of his love for Costanza revived all the rage and disappointment he had experienced. This soon converted the thrilling and pleasurable sensation, which her presence had at first produced, into a bitter feeling of revenge.

Costanza beheld with dignified composure the workings of his mind, and awaited the result with firmness. Her's was not a spirit to be intimidated or subdued by those ebullitions which generally awe the feelings of the softer sex. She was aware of the power of Don Alvar, and of his resentful pride, and though she inwardly dreaded their effect, she

would not allow the smallest token of weakness to escape her. Her pride was equal to that of Lara: and now that she saw him triumphant, and possessing all the means of revenge, she rose superior to her fate, and from her very helplessness seemed to acquire a spirit of defiance.

After some lapse of time, Lara advanced, with looks of offended dignity, while a smile of bitterness gave additional force to his vexation.

“Lady,” he said, in scorn, “you may, perhaps, spare your parent and myself a world of trouble. Don Egas, it appears, is so ignorant of the various departments of his own castle, that he really cannot tell the precise spot where he who called himself King of Castile lies concealed. Fair ladies are often better acquainted with plans for secreting and abetting the escape of unfortunate and illustrious persons—you perhaps—”

“Stay, Don Alvar,” proudly interrupted Costanza. “Whatever be the object of your

mission to this castle, it cannot surely be to insult a female whom you suppose to be wholly unprotected. I will spare you the trouble of continuing your scornful banter, by openly confessing that to protect the escape of any unfortunate man, much more that of my king, from the pursuit of his rebellious subjects, would be always to me a most grateful and pleasing duty."

Don Alvar de Lara bit his lip in anger, and strove with difficulty to stifle his overpowering passion; but he replied with as much composure as the agitation of his feelings would permit.

" 'Tis well; we must not separate until you witness the capture of the tyrant in whose fate you are so wonderfully interested; no doubt that Don Ferran de Castro is the faithful companion of his flight. It will afford you, perhaps, an additional pleasure to see new proofs of his heroic behaviour—that behaviour which seems to have had such powerful influence in gaining your admiration; condescend to accompany us, lady."

As he said, the fierceness of his passion became almost ungovernable ; disappointment and jealousy raged in his heart : nor did the cold composure and apparent disregard with which his power of doing harm had been treated by Costanza, tend to mitigate the violence of those sensations. Don Egas felt a gloomy presentiment of evil ; in silence he accompanied his irritated kinsman, and vainly endeavoured to tax his fruitful invention for a new clue to extricate him from the labyrinth in which he found himself. He considered the capture of Don Pedro as almost certain ; he did not dread any stigma attached to the discovery, for the act of which he would be convicted was productive of no stain on the honour of a nobleman ; what more sorely perplexed his mind was the consequent results of the discovery. Trastamara, he expected, would inflict no punishment, for having fulfilled the laws of hospitality towards his unfortunate brother ; but yet he would be little inclined to smile upon his entertainer.

Don Egas would thus forfeit every claim to courtly favour—he would become a cipher in the new order of things, which he imagined was about to be established, and forego every prospect of resuming that station to which he was, by birth, entitled. Under these gloomy speculations, the old cavalier followed the violent Lara in his determined search for the king's retreat. To his utter dismay he perceived him eagerly direct his steps towards the chamber in the retired tower where the king was concealed. The confidence of Don Alvar's behaviour heightened his suspicions, that he was acquainted with the panel of the secret spring, and he awaited with anxiety the termination of this unfortunate affair; Lara entered the apartment, cast a lowering look around, then with a sardonic smile observed—

“ We are arrived at last at the interesting spot; this chamber has I know always been destined to the charitable purposes of sheltering the unfortunate and persecuted, for by these

names, no doubt, your humanity will call the fugitive oppressor of Castile. Now, Don Egas de Vargas," he added, in a grave and haughty tone, "I must immediately be made acquainted with the secret retreat. As you value the safety of your castle—nay, as you esteem your own security—you must hasten to comply with our demand—in the name of the king, we summon you, Señor, to deliver up the traitor."

Don Egas saw his danger, but made no answer. Some of the party began meantime to scrutinize the walls, but they could discover no crevice, no clue, to guide them in their search. Don Alvar de Lara beheld their baffled efforts with fierce disappointment ; he looked at Don Egas, then at his daughter, but he could gather no indication from their countenances. A dignified composure sat upon the features of Costanza, while her father's crafty policy conveyed only in his looks an expression of apparent calmness and unconcern, which began to stagger Lara's belief respecting the concealment

of the king. The young cavalier became enraged at the failure of his enterprise ; but he was too deeply versed in the crafty diplomacy peculiar to those times, to relinquish his inquiries until he had essayed every means of attaining the end in view. He could not imagine how Don Pedro had effected his escape, surrounded as the castle was by numerous and staunch adherents of Trastamara. Again he indulged the supposition that he continued an inmate of the place, and he attributed the composure of both Don Egas and his daughter, not to his actual escape, but to the confidence they entertained in the impossibility of a discovery. This idea added to his indignation, though at the same time it strengthened him in his resolution of carrying things to extremities should Vargas persevere in refusing to unfold the place of concealment.

“ Señor Don Egas,” he repeated, with emotion, “ consider well the madness of your continuing to give shelter to Don Pedro, when I am convinced that he is here, and am firmly

resolved to adopt every means to prevent his escape."

"Don Alvar de Lara," answered the old cavalier, "on what you can ground such an absurd conclusion, is to me a secret—you may satisfy yourself by the most strict search; but, at all events, you must not suppose me degraded enough to deliver up the fugitive, were he really in the castle."

"Your craftiness, Señor," returned Lara, smiling proudly, "cannot deceive me;—however, my duty summons me to persevere, and I have no time to spare; the purport of my visit must be fulfilled immediately. Don Pedro shall not escape: either he must be delivered alive into our hands, or mingle his ashes in the smoking ruins of this castle."

"What mean you, Lara?" demanded Don Egas, in alarm.

"The truth," sternly returned Don Alvar; "it is my fixed determination to commit this proud building to the flames, unless Don Pedro

be surrendered before the lapse of half an hour."

These words, and the resolute tone in which they were pronounced, seriously alarmed Don Egas. Costanza started, and Lara, who beheld the impression which his threat had produced, was further confirmed in his belief that the king was concealed in the castle. The arrogant manner in which Don Alvar comported himself fired the old cavalier, and, spite of his constitutional prudence and profound policy, he could no longer refrain from testifying evident indications of his feelings.

"Fire the castle!" he exclaimed; "by what authority, Señor?"

"By my own authority!" angrily returned young De Lara—"nay, this would be but a lenient retribution of the wrongs which I have endured from your family; but my duty happily justifies any measure, however violent, when it is to forward the views of the acknowledged king, Don Enrique."

“What an honourable manner,” said Costanza, bitterly, “of paving your way to the good graces of the new sovereign of Castile !”

Lara condescended not to answer, but, with haughty looks and proud bearing, minutely surveyed the place around. Don Egas seemed deeply absorbed in meditation—all his scheming faculties deserted him in this emergency ; his embarrassment became apparent, and confirmed the suspicions of Lara. The brutal soldiers testified, by their looks, the ferocious joy they felt at the prospect of seeing the downfall of the castle, from which they expected to derive valuable booty, previous to the conflagration.

“Time speeds !” calmly observed Don Alvar, “and so Heaven save me, but I intend to abide by my word.”

The fears of Costanza were now too powerful to admit of further disguise ; her fortitude was no proof against the certainty of the doom which she dreaded, and she looked upon the capture of the unfortunate Don Pedro as inevitable. Lara

observed her emotion, and smiled in sarcastic joy at the alarm he had occasioned. That deep feeling of injured pride, that rankling sting of jealousy, those sensations of disappointment and rage, which had been long treasured in his heart, now led him to triumph in the power he possessed of awing those persons by whom he considered he had been so deeply wronged. Lara, though exceedingly brave and generous, took a vindictive pleasure, common alike to the man of extraordinary passions, and the wretch of lowly sentiments, in gratifying his revenge. He could now entertain no doubt that Don Pedro was in his power, and the prospect of carrying him before his victorious enemy, diffused a gleam of joy over his features.

“Soldiers !” he said, turning to his adherents, “prepare to obey my commands ; let the torches be made ready.”

“Never, Don Alvar !” cried Costanza ; “you cannot meditate such glaring barbarity. Reflect on your atrocious purpose—you would violate

the most sacred duties, and offend against all laws, human and divine!—turn not the edge of your unjust wrath against your own kindred.”

“Kindred!” cried out Lara, with mingled scorn and satisfaction; “kindred! it is now, and only now, that the daughter of Don Egas de Vargas finds out the use of that soothing word to address Alvar de Lara. Kindred, forsooth!” he repeated, with a bitter smile, “and can you claim the privilege of such?”

“No; I appeal to your generosity, your honour as a man, and a noble Castilian,” nobly replied Costanza.

“And vainly shall your appeal ring in mine ear,” returned Don Alvar, with exultation. “Don Egas de Vargas,” he then proceeded, turning to the old cavalier, who was at a loss what course to pursue, “surely the sight of your castle in flames, cannot present such charms as to make you insensible to my warning.”

The grief and dismay of De Vargas and his daughter were now but too apparent. It was

impossible to divert the fierce Lara from his horrid purpose, or longer to endeavour to deceive him. The dilemma of the old cavalier was fearful, and was reflected in the blank dismay of his looks; he could not reconcile his heart to give up the person of the king, and yet he was fully convinced that the character of Don Pedro was such, that he would sooner perish amidst the flames, than surrender his person, of his own accord, to his enemies.

But the terror, the agony of Costanza, was even of a more absorbing nature than her parent's; the safety of her lover was involved in that of the threatened Don Pedro, and she knew the mind of the noble Castilian too well to doubt, for a moment, he would share the fate of that sovereign, to whose person he had so faithfully clung, in all the vicissitudes of his fortune. Accordingly, she no longer strove to disguise the fearful workings of her heart; her agitation was great, and Lara, now perfectly assured of the justice of his surmises, coolly observed—

“The fox must be unkenneled now ; nothing can save him. Don Pedro, come forward !” he cried, energetically ; “see that you involve not in your ruin those who have befriended you.”

A horrid pause ensued. Don Egas stood motionless, in an attitude of hopeless suspense ; Costanza reclined in agony against a casement, and the different attendants evinced, in their mournful looks, their consternation at the idea of the approaching calamity.

“Come forward, Don Pedro,” again shouted Lara, “come forward, or resign yourself to a fiery grave ! ’tis for the last time I now call upon you.”

A noise was heard ;—it was a hollow sound proceeding from the wall ; a smile of triumph was on Lara’s lip—a cold shudder ran through the Vargas. In awful expectation the eyes of every one were directed towards the spot, whence the noise proceeded ; gently a panel is removed, an aperture in the wall becomes visible, and the

object of pursuit advances into the apartment, his countenance partly concealed by his cloak. A shout of joy from his enemies, hailed his appearance;—Vargas and his daughter cast a look of gloomy despair upon each other.

“’Tis well, Señor,” said Don Alvar, addressing his enemy, “you have taken this prudent resolution; else, in a few minutes, my threat would have been carried into execution.”

He received no answer from the figure, which stood motionless at the entrance of the panel, apparently in reckless unconcern. Lara could no longer restrain the transport of his pride and exultation, at the success of his pursuit.

“Thanks to Heaven, our labours are at an end! Your capture, Señor, happily restores peace and tranquillity to Castile; her sufferings have been prolonged, but they are at last brought to a termination, by the long desired accession of Don Enrique to the throne.”

This vindictive speech seemed to have excited no ordinary emotion in the person to whom it

was addressed, and the temper of Don Pedro became discernible in the strong convulsion which his frame seemed to sustain. The prospect of his lost crown had operated more strongly upon him, than the dread of his inveterate rival's revenge.

"Submit, Don Pedro, to your fate," said Don Alvar; "resistance would be madness in the present case; you must, therefore, quietly suffer yourself to be conducted before Don Enrique."

"Rebellious traitor! do not rejoice in your supposed achievement," cried the figure, with a powerful voice; "Don Pedro will yet be enabled to punish the revolt of a bastard brother, and his factious nobles. Rejoice not, De Lara; I repeat, your vigilance is baffled; Don Pedro of Castile, with the help of God, is safe."

"What mean you?" cried Don Alvar, in amazement; "you are then—no, no, 'tis impossible—he could not escape. Who, in the name of Satan, are you?"

“Don Ferran de Castro!” cried the noble Castilian, throwing aside his disguise.

A cry of wonder burst from every one. Lara stood motionless for a moment—but soon his passionate feelings gained the ascendancy over his amazement. He stamped fiercely in his disappointment—a foam actually whitened his compressed lip, and his eye was lit up with the terrible flash of irresistible rage. It produced, however, no signs of emotion in the calm features of Ferran de Castro. With a proud dignity he beheld the ebullition of his rival’s temper, and though he might expect the utmost violence from the impulse of his vengeance, he yet appeared perfectly collected and firm, in the expectation of his fate. Don Egas was partially relieved from his racking anxiety by this unexpected apparition, though his perplexity increased when he perceived the effects which the disappointment of Lara was likely to produce. Costanza’s situation was one of exquisite torture. She

beheld her betrothed in the power of his revengeful rival ;—a separation from him was now inevitable, and a cloud of gloomy forebodings began to darken her soul. Lara suffered his fierce looks to wander from one to another, and his bitter disappointment seemed somewhat relieved by the misery he beheld depicted in the countenances of the group ; but the composed and tranquil demeanour of Don Ferran more than all exasperated his mind. He fixed a withering look upon the noble Castilian, and, in a voice trembling with emotion,

“ Señor Don Ferran,” he cried, “ ’tis well that when the tyrant evaded our pursuit, he left so noble and willing a substitute—a substitute, indeed, which may partly console *me*, at least, for the flight of the principal. You shall not be defrauded of the guerdon so justly due to your self-devotion. No,” he added, with a scornful smile, “ Don Alvar de Lara will not lose so favourable an opportunity of showing his grati-

tude for this act, as well as for many former services and favours which he has not yet acknowledged."

This cruel banter was received by the Castilian in proud and silent contempt. At this time another individual issued from the secret passage—it was the good escudero Pimiento, who, with a face radiating with joy, and a stately pace, advanced into the apartment. Then, addressing Alvar de Lara,

"Señor," he said, "you may now vent all your malice on our devoted heads; like good subjects, as in duty bound, we shall scorn to complain. We can proudly boast, that we have saved Don Pedro of Castile from the hands of his treacherous pursuers. Thanks to our Lady and the blessed Santiago, he is now out of the reach of danger."

"Foolish dotard," replied Lara, in agitation, "rest assured you shall not escape the punishment which you naturally enough anticipate. Yes, I swear it, by our king Don Enrique!"

He then ordered some of his men to search the secret passage, in order to leave nothing untried, but it was soon found that the Castilian and his escudero had only spoken the truth. The rage of Don Alvar de Lara became, by degrees, more and more ungovernable ; he summoned the soldiers who had been posted outside the castle, and examined them strictly, accusing them of connivance in the escape of Don Pedro. To his utter surprise and dismay, one of the party answered his interrogatories, by informing him that a man was seen galloping in the direction of Almagro, a town still under the command of the adherents of Don Pedro.

“Fly, Manriquez !” he cried to his lieutenant, “fly with the best mounted of our troops, and see that the fugitive be secured.”

“Alas, Don Alvar,” replied Manriquez, “according to the account of our sentinels, such a capture is impossible.”

“Looked he like Don Pedro ?” inquired Lara.

“No,” answered a soldier; “he was a stranger to us all; though Pero Mendez said he looked exactly like Don Ferran de Castro; at least he bore the same dress as the Castilian.”

“By hell!” thundered Lara, foaming with rage, “the plot is now discovered; the fugitive must be Don Pedro.”

“It is Don Pedro,” exultingly cried Pimiento; “it is Don Pedro, and by this time, heaven be praised, he must be in perfect safety at the faithful town of Almagro.”

“Wretch!” exclaimed Don Alvar, “rejoice not in his escape, for learn, deluded idiot, that for this exploit you, as well as your proud master, shall most assuredly suffer, and bite the dust.”

“Don Alvar,” said the Castilian, haughtily, “whatever may be the power of your threats over vulgar men, you must know that they are utterly worthless when addressed to Ferran de Castro. I have done my duty to my king, and fulfilled the part of a loyal subject—it is an act

which reflects as much honour on the name of a noble Castilian, as your impotent rage does little credit to the followers of the usurper Trastamara."

"Your insolence, proud Señor, will soon find a fitting curb, so Heaven help me! Arrogant as your nature may be, perhaps your heart is not entirely callous to all the softer emotions of the heart; perchance, that even the austerity of your character, the boasted impassibility of your temper, may present a weak point, through which the poisoned sting may be directed; at all events, you must now learn, if such a truth has, by chance, escaped your penetration, that I have the power legally to inflict upon you the most severe of penalties, the penalty reserved for traitors!—death!"

"I marvel, Señor, that you are yet alive," said the Castilian, scornfully, "if such penalties were duly put in execution. Enough, Sir; add not ungenerous insult to the vile instigation of rivalry and disappointed rage; lead wherever

you will—I am prepared to meet my fate. *I am* no traitor—I fear not to die—I pity and despise your impotent malice. You ought to blush to name yourself a Castilian. You are no true knight.”

The fearless boldness and dignified composure of De Castro, struck the adverse soldiers with a sensation of respect and awe: Costanza looked upon the generous cavalier with admiration, and through the torrent of grief that dimmed her beautiful eyes, there shone a gleam of consolation, arising from the conviction of the merit of the object of her love; but female tenderness and anxiety soon resumed their sway over her heart. The threats of Don Alvar rung ominous in her ear, and she felt convinced he was a man to carry them into execution. The irritation of his feelings, the hatred which he bore the Castilian, as a favoured rival, and the many disappointments he had experienced, would silence in his bosom the voice of sympathy, when appeal-

ing in behalf of an unfortunate and noble foe. The suspense of Costanza was short, and her fears were fatally confirmed.

“ Bind the prisoners !” shouted Lara to his party ; “ they are too dangerous to allow them even the remotest chance of effecting an escape.”

“ Cruel, ungenerous Lara !” cried the unhappy girl, with indignant feeling ; “ you merely desire to add torture to his situation, by heaping on him these gratuitous insults. See you not that bonds are worse than death ; that the iron enters his soul ? You are convinced that his word of honour would bind Ferran de Castro as firmly as the most powerful chains ; but consummate your paltry triumph ;—the effects of your malice and revenge can only be degrading to him who seeks so unworthy a method of testifying his hatred to a helpless adversary.”

“ Lead on,” interrupted De Castro ; “ I am ready to follow. Farewell, Costanza ! and should I be doomed never more to behold you,

let the glory of my life temper your sorrow for my loss ! Lead on, thou minion of a bastard, and learn how a loyal Castilian ought to die."

" Oh ! speak not thus, Ferran !" cried Costanza, in agony ; " your words chill my heart : you judge but ungenerously of your rival, if you suppose him capable of wreaking such revenge on his defenceless foe."

" Lady !" said Lara, with a bitter smile of triumph, " your opinion of Don Alvar is doubtless very flattering, though, I am bound to confess, that of Don Ferran is the more just. I marvel Costanza, that you should think thus favourably of me, and yet have set so strange a value upon my merits ; as for you, Don Egas De Vargas, having taken no part in the field against Don Enrique, I will not deprive you of liberty ; you are free, but forget not that your conduct with regard to Don Pedro shall be faithfully reported to the king. And now, Señor de Castro, let us to the town of Orcajo, where, since you are so well prepared, ere the sun goes down,

you must undergo the fate of 'a convicted traitor.' ”

“ Heaven ! what fate ? ” cried Costanza ; eagerly.

“ Death ! I repeat, death ! ” replied Lara, sternly.

A cry of horror burst from the unfortunate lady.

“ Death ! ” repeated Don Egas, in chilled surprise. “ No, Don Alvar, you cannot mean it ! ”

“ I never prevaricate, Señor,” calmly replied Lara ; “ his doom is fixed, no power on earth can save him. Come on !—to Orcajo.”

The party moved to depart. Costanza, in an agony of grief, strove to detain the vindictive Lara ; he rudely threw her from him, and reiterated his order to depart.

“ Costanza ! my own Costanza ! ” cried Ferran, striving to stifle his emotion, “ be composed, and deport yourself as becomes your rank and name. Oh ! as you value my esteem, as you hope to impart comfort in these trying

moments, let me depart from you, with the firm conviction you will ever regard yourself as the betrothed of Ferran de Castro. In the name of Heaven, sue not to him; no, never stoop to flatter the pride of this monster: amidst our misfortunes we can, at least, deprive him of the fiendish satisfaction, which a show of weakness would afford him. Adieu, my love! my good, my great Costanza; may Heaven bless you, and shower upon you the happiness you deserve."

Then, with stern and dignified demeanour, he waved his hand in token of his readiness to go. The affliction of Costanza had attained its height—a film came over her sight, a giddiness over her brain; the cold hue of the grave diffused itself on her cheek; her eyes closed; a tremor shook her frame; she appeared ready to fall, and her maids supported her. Don Egas, astounded with the scene, remained, like a lifeless statue, fixed to the ground; he did not attempt to speak, but in mournful silence beheld the

party gradually departing from the place. Ferran de Castro made a gentle inclination of the head as he passed; but Pimiento, who seemed to have acquired additional pride from the fate in which he was involved, drew himself up with stately pride, and addressed the old cavalier :

“ *Animo, Señor,*”* he said ; “ we shall shew the degenerate Castilians that there still exist men worthy of emulating the glory of the Cids and the Bernardos. Look upon Don Ferran, good Señor, and from his example, learn to exchange a little of what you call policy, for some of the virtues, more becoming a noble cavalier—magnanimity, and scorn of death.”

In a few moments, the bustle of departure subsided, and the castle was left in the desolation of grief.

* Courage, Sir.

CHAPTER III.

DISTRESSING CHOICE.

Già troppo abborro il mio rival ; già troppa
Smaniosa rabbia ho in petto ; a furor tanto
Non accrescer furore.

ALFIERI.

It was probable that he himself was scarcely conscious, at that moment, of the thoughts which rushed through his breast, like the confused and hurrying masses of cloud in a stormy sky.

LEITCH RITCHIE.

BEFORE we proceed further, it will be proper to explain how Don Pedro had been able to effect his escape from the imminent peril that surrounded him, when the gates of the castle were flung open, and the pursuers rushed eagerly upon their devoted prey. Resolved to avail

himself of the secret passage, as the only remaining resource, he had hardly entered when suddenly the countenance of Pimiento brightened up, and having fastened the door behind them, he advanced confidently towards the king, and addressed him—

“ Señor,” he said, “ I am an humble escudero, and unworthy of affording counsel to my betters ; but methinks I have the means of providing for your majesty’s escape from this abominable asylum ; for, truly, to speak my mind, it does not suit the dignity of the King of Castile to be hemmed up in a darksome retreat, like some noble deer, flying from the gripe of so many mischievous curs. I would, with all deference and respect, propose a more manly resource, which, as it partakes of the stratagems of war, is more in accordance with the majesty of your person, than thus creeping into damp and unwholesome hiding-places.”

“ Explain,” said Ferran ; “ what hast thou in contemplation ?”

“Some wise expedient, no doubt,” replied Don Pedro; “like that of suffering a scout to escape, and thereby occasioning all the mischief and dangers that followed.”

“Heaven bless you, Señor, and pardon me my unwitting offence,” humbly returned the escudero—“but with the help of our good Lady, I trust partly to repair my fault: we must use despatch. Here, Señor, behold this token,” he added, producing it—“it is the signet of Trastámara.”

Don Pedro recoiled with loathing and abhorrence from the object.

“What!” he exclaimed, indignantly, “how camest thou by that abominable token?”

“My lord, the tale is long, and the recital would defeat the execution of my plan—enough that I obtained it in no unbecoming way, and that it may now be subservient to the safety of Don Pedro de Castile.”

“Again, I demand,” repeated the king—
“how came that signet into your possession?”

“ From the hand of Don Enrique himself,” replied Pimiento, in a tone of fearless integrity—“ once I had an opportunity of doing him a signal service, as a man ; this was my reward : this small token carries along with it the magic charm of procuring safety to the possessor ; and I need not add, that it will facilitate for him the means of passing unmolested, even through the ranks of the rebels.”

“ No, no,” said Don Pedro, bitterly—“ not when the possessor is discovered to be the King of Castile.”

“ Certainly not,” interposed Don Ferran—“ the vigilance of the traitor’s sentinels must be baffled. Señor,” he then added, in a manly, resolute tone—“ we must change dresses immediately ; my person at least is not so obnoxious, and, by the aid of this signet, he who presents it can effect his escape ; fortunately, our stature greatly favours the deceit, and it cannot but be attended with success. Let us hasten.”

As he said, he began to execute his intention.

The king hesitated for a moment; but the danger was pressing, and the flattering prospect of escaping, and again recovering the means of striking once more for his lost crown, stifled every other consideration. The change of dress was soon effected; and, further to disguise his person, a patch was drawn over the left eye of the king, and his metamorphosis appeared complete.

“But your safety!” said Don Pedro.

“Fear not, Señor,” answered the noble Castilian, “your preservation must be our first object; ours will of necessity follow, protected as we are by the hospitality of Don Egas. Begone, Señor, by that door; I hear some one approaching. On the first opportunity, Pimiento will rejoin you, and you can gain the town of Almagro, where I shall meet you with the utmost expedition. Begone, Señor, and Heaven guide your steps, and preserve you in safety!”

“Amen!” solemnly responded the old escu-

dero, as he helped the king to effect his disguise.

This being done, on the rumour of the enemy's approach, his two faithful attendants retired into the passage. After various turnings, and a long descent of a narrow staircase, they gently opened a private door, and found themselves in a narrow court, from which they heard the buzz of the sentinels outside. Ferran and the escudero here took an affectionate leave of the king, and fervently pressed his offered hand. They then retraced their steps to the secret passage, as they could not be seen together without exciting suspicions, the more as Ferran de Castro wore the attire of Don Pedro.

The king, meantime, boldly opened the gate, but was soon commanded to stop by two or three of the sentinels, who having beheld the signet of Trastamara, made no further attempt to impede his progress; they naturally supposed him to be employed in some secret business by Don Enrique, and accordingly allowed him to pass.

Even if some slight suspicion had been awakened, they knew the sacredness of the token presented to them, and they dared not dispute its power. Don Pedro slowly continued his march, and having come to an avenue of trees, where the horses of the party stood, he chose one of the fleetest, and, applying spurs, fled in the direction of Almagro, where he safely arrived before noon. Meantime, Ferran de Castro, who had returned to the passage with the faithful squire, heard the conversation that passed upon the arrival of Lara in the apartment, and which has been just related. The threat of delivering the castle to the flames, induced the Castilian, as we have seen, to surrender to his enemies.

The noble cavalier and his attendant were now marching towards Orcajo, to meet an untimely fate. The tramp of horses was no longer heard—a gloomy stillness pervaded the Castle of Vargas, and Costanza returned to a perfect consciousness of her misery. For a moment she seemed fixed in a stupor of despair. Her father

strove to soothe the bitterness of her silent grief. His tender expostulations in some degree restored the power of reflection, and convinced her of the necessity of adopting some resolution, to avert if possible her lover's impending fate. These ideas operated strongly on her mind, and the poignancy of her grief yielded to the excitement which they produced. Yet what course could she adopt? she trembled for the life of her lover; she knew too well the implacable nature of Lara, to misconstrue his words into an idle threat; she resolved, therefore, to take any course, however desperate, that offered a chance of saving her lover from the vengeance of his implacable foe!

“Oh, father!” she cried, with renewed energy, “we must not suffer him to perish;—no, no—he must not, he shall not die!”

“How can it be prevented?” despondingly observed the old cavalier; “saw you not the stern resolution evinced in Lara's words and looks? Alas! my child, I cannot flatter you with

delusive hopes ; an application to Don Enrique, by which means alone his fate might be averted, would now be fruitless. Before the intelligence could reach Toledo, the object of the appeal would be numbered with the dead."

" Oh ! father, is that the only consolation you can afford your hapless daughter ?"

" Consolation !" exclaimed Don Egas, " Heaven defend us, I am much in need of it myself. God only knows the consolation that fate has in reserve for me. The representations of Lara will for ever lose me in the good opinion of the new king. Ay, not all my prudence and policy will avail to protect us in this case. We are ruined, Costanza, ruined for ever ! Sequestration of goods will be the least of our miseries—perhaps banishment may follow. Yes, my child, I shall leave you a beggar !"

" And think you such paltry subjects can occupy my mind, when I am menaced with the most dreadful of all calamities ? Judge not so meanly of your daughter ; the favours of fortune

I can easily forego, but I shall never recover from the shock of *his* loss. Oh! my kind father, let us fly to save him!"

"Fly! whither?—how can we save him?"

"Leave me to accomplish the task; we must essay any means—and if we fail—"

She could not finish her words; a pang of agony shot across her heart: but she soon recovered her wonted firmness, and collected herself enough to order a servant to get ready her palfrey, with the utmost expedition.

"Señor," she then said to her father, "you must accompany me to Orcajo. If our kinsman Lara is not the most obdurate of monsters, he will not hear my piercing lamentations in vain. No, if he is a man, he cannot glut himself with the prospect of the misery he is about to inflict."

Don Egas readily complied with his daughter's impassioned request. He was not secretly displeased at this determination, for though he dreaded the imperious character of Lara, he

yet cherished the fond idea that his Costanza's power of persuasion would soften the cavalier's rigour towards his enemy, and, at all events, that he would shew more clemency towards themselves, even should he be disposed to make no concessions in behalf of the Castilian. This feeling of self, mingling in his affection for his child, made Don Egas very active and eager for their departure. Thus scarcely had an hour passed, since the party of Alvar had quitted the castle, before he and Costanza, accompanied by one or two attendants, were already on the road to Orcajo.

Don Alvar de Lara had now arrived there with his prisoners, each on their way preserving a dismal silence; the old escudero's indignant feelings, indeed, had now and then provoked him to burst forth into his usual quaint and chivalrous remonstrances: but as he perceived they were totally disregarded by their insensible and unknightly conductors, he very prudently desisted from his practice.

Upon their arrival at Orcajo, the prisoners

were immediately thrown into close confinement, until the moment should arrive for deciding their fate. Their lives were, indeed, in the power of Lara ; and, in turbulent times, such acts of violence are overlooked in the hurry of more momentous events—lost in the excitation of party feelings. The familiarity which the mind acquires with fearful scenes and deeds of horror, accustoms us to receive terrible impressions with a degree of apathy, from which, in more tranquil moments, the most insensible would shrink with dismay.

The death, therefore, of Ferran de Castro, in the present posture of affairs, might be accomplished by his rancorous rival, not only with perfect safety, but even with a prospect of acquiring new claims to the gratitude of Trastamara. Don Ferran's noted attachment to the king, and the conspicuous part he had acted during the eventful period of these civil wars, made him be looked upon by the adverse party as their most redoubtable enemy, and one in whose

fall they would naturally be interested. But despite of these re-assuring considerations, and the natural impulse of hatred which counselled the death of the Castilian, Lara felt a secret pang that made him pause, and brought to his mind a train of gloomy and perplexing reflections. He could not, even in the conflict of the passions, turn a deaf ear to certain small whisperings of conscience, which depicted the death of the gallant Don Ferran in the most hideous colours. In vain did Lara endeavour to stifle these tormenting suggestions in their birth. In vain did he essay to convince his reason of the necessity of the act, by arguing their relative position as enemies, and the many evils which his pardon might occasion to the cause of Don Enrique; for, despite of all his arguments, he always came to the afflicting conclusion, that the death of the Castilian would be considered a deed of private revenge, rather than a sacrifice to the public good.

Under the dominion of highly excited feelings,

he now paced his apartment, in a mood of torturing irresolution; the struggle was fearful, but the violence of his temper and the wrongs which he fancied he had received from Castro, together with the suggestions of offended pride, were fearful odds against the weak voice of generosity and kindly feeling, which at intervals pleaded in behalf of his rival. In a lucid moment of heroism, he would suddenly resolve upon giving liberty to his prisoners, but the noble impulse was as suddenly checked by a recollection that harrowed up his mind with the dismal picture of his wrongs, and the keen joys of satisfied revenge. This combat of the more manly and the darker passions, had now lasted some time; happy had it been suffered to continue longer—happy had not Lara been broken in upon during this momentous conflict; for, to the honour of human nature be it spoken, that in high minds, if the struggle be long protracted, so that reflection is enabled for a moment to decide between good and evil, the

victory is mostly obtained by the better part of human nature. But, unluckily, in the present case, when the spirit of good was fast gaining an ascendancy over the darker and more selfish passions, the salutary effects of its influence were suddenly dissolved by an unseasonable interruption of Lara's thoughts.

An attendant entered to announce that a female claimed an immediate interview: and scarcely had this message been delivered, when the person burst into the room, presenting to the astonished sight of young De Lara his fair relative Costanza—the origin of the violent feelings which distracted his breast. This apparition, by bringing more vividly and forcibly to his mind the cause of his sufferings, brought into powerful action those fearful feelings which the voice of generosity and the suggestions of reason had partially succeeded in lulling to rest.

Don Alvar de Lara stood in the middle of the apartment, with folded arms, striving to subdue the overpowering passion which this visit had produced. He did not speak, but in a stern

and withering silence he waited for the fair and afflicted visitor to open the nature of her mission, which he already more than surmised. Costanza advanced, with unaffected, yet proud dignity, towards the young cavalier, and, in a steady though mournful voice, explained the object of her intrusion.

“Don Alvar de Lara,” she said, “the very fact of my being in your presence, will inform you of the sad motive which compels me to take this step.”

“I might guess it,” replied Don Alvar, smiling bitterly, “without any great stretch of imagination. Yes, I can easily perceive that I am indebted to the noble Don Ferran de Castro, for the honour of this visit. Pity I cannot return his favour with an adequate sense of gratitude.”

“I will not, Lara,” said Costanza meekly, “pretend to deny that you have received wrongs, which in some measure justify the angry feelings which storm your breast.”

“I am greatly beholden to you, lady,” replied

Lara, bitterly, "for your sincerity; and since you are so persuaded, it follows naturally that your mind is prepared to expect from me the conduct which men adopt when similarly placed."

"No, no, Don Alvar," returned she; "though I might dread the violence of your temper, yet I can place some reliance on your more generous nature. No, you cannot in a moment of reflection, put in execution the horrid threat you made this morning, under the influence of angry passion; you cannot accomplish a deed, which would throw a dark cloud over the brilliancy of your reputation, your future life and happiness."

"My future life and happiness!" interrupted Don Alvar, with a scornful smile; "strange *you* should ever have pronounced such words—strange, in sooth, that the happiness of Alvar de Lara should of late, even for a moment, have occupied the attention of Costanza de Vargas. But the peril of our own friends makes us wonderfully solicitous about the motions of our most detested enemies."

“ Alas ! Don Alvar, you have no reason to treat me thus. You know that, far from considering you as a detested enemy, I always cherished a kind regard for your virtues and brilliant qualifications. My friendship you have had, you have still, and may more firmly establish it for the future, by an act of generosity to which your nature is no stranger.”

“ On your friendship and regard I can set all the value they deserve ; but you must not condemn me for being unsatisfied with such feelings, when I had a *right* to command a much warmer sentiment. I will not recal the odious subject ; enough, that it is impressed deeply upon my mind. You have doubtless followed the impulse of your heart : you cannot blame me if I consult my own ; further explanation is unnecessary. I am not the generous, or rather, the weak, foolish man, you affect to suppose me ; I have been deeply, mortally wronged : my retribution is at hand : I will not suffer it to escape ; your request therefore, if it relate to my foe, must meet with an absolute rejection !”

Lara pronounced these words in a firm and fierce manner, enough to blight the hopes of the disconsolate suppliant ; but she would not yield herself to despair ; she had known her kinsman from his infancy ; she was sensible that generosity was allied to his violence of temper ; and by appealing to past recollections, she hoped to awaken his sympathy.

“ Don Alvar, you cannot resolve to make me for ever wretched. No, you cannot meditate *his* death. Oh ! call to mind that he was once your friend, the companion of your infancy, the dear comrade of your youth ; unfortunate events separated you in after life : you became enemies ; but surely his misfortunes cannot have extinguished in your heart, every spark of friendly feeling : if it has lain dormant, let it be rekindled in the hour of distress.”

“ No, you have extinguished it for ever !” cried Lara, in agitation ; for the very means that Costanza adopted to excite his sympathy, only

tended to awaken his jealousy and disappointment more fiercely.

“ He has been your enemy, but a noble one : treat him as such.”

“ He is my rival, my fortunate rival !” replied Lara, with a fearful expression of bitterness and revenge.

“ You cannot forget the claims of former friendship.”

“ I forget all, all ! I can only remember that *you* love him. The most galling injury, any offence, any wrong, I might forgive ; your *love* for him I never can. No, no, this blasting thought has often darkened my daring ambition. Yes, in the hour of felicity, this idea would intrude, and plant a dagger in my heart. Never could I hold the cup of pleasure to my lips, but the withering power of some corrosive recollection, would convert it into bitter gall. You were born to be my bane. You have ever been present to my distracted mind. Yes, like some spirit of evil, robed in placid smiles, only to madden me with rage

and disappointment—by day, and in the dreams of night, you come to mock me, and rack my heart with fierce passions, that stifle all softer feelings. Incessantly your image has pursued me—it came in the hour of joy to efface the sweet illusion—it came in moments of adversity to heighten the gloom of misery. This I have suffered, and am doomed to suffer, for the stirring scenes of my life are not sufficient to dispel the recollection of your perjured love, your dark treachery. Nay, start not, Costanza, treachery most dark it was, that you shrunk not from committing, and yet you come to *me*, to intercede for the object of my utter abhorrence.”

“Oh, Lara ! your complaints are not unfounded ; but of treachery I never could be guilty—least of all towards you. There was no deception. Openly I spoke the sentiments of my heart for the man who has ever since held over it an absolute sway. I never deceived you, though I might have deceived myself. Before I knew him, our mutual situation, as relatives

and companions since childhood, made me look upon you with that innocent confidence, that regard and friendship, which it was so naturally calculated to excite. These sentiments were, unhappily, misconstrued into a more warm, and, to me, unfortunate feeling. Alas! since that moment, my life has been a series of troubles and anxiety. If I offended, sorely have I atoned for my offence; but oh! Lara, you will not carry your revenge to lengths unworthy of your family and your rank as a noble Castilian. Revenge not upon a noble foe, the fault of which I alone am guilty."

Costanza fixed her imploring looks on the stern, calm countenance of Lara; but she saw no sign of sympathy relaxing his rigid features. For a moment he seemed deeply absorbed—then an inward struggle swelled his bosom—his cheek was flushed, his hand trembled, and large drops of moisture stood upon his contracted brow. He cast a penetrating look on the fair suppliant; but her beauty, her brilliant merit, and the certainty

of her devoted affection for Ferran de Castro, added fearfully to the passion that consumed him. He recoiled from Costanza—he seemed under the uncontrollable influence of some demoniac spirit ; his features writhed with agony ; a ghastly smile curled his hueless lip—he drew his breath heavily—he convulsively clenched his hand—then, suddenly, in a low, oppressed, and horrible tone,

“You love him—love him passionately,” he muttered.

“Yes ; more than life, more than all !” fervently replied Costanza.

“He shall die,” cried Lara, with a burst of fierce exultation, “nought on earth can save him.”

“Oh, horror ! horror !” screamed Costanza, hopelessly ; “not yet—decide not yet—hear me—but for one moment hear me ! Behold me at your feet—spurn me not—you were ever generous, Alvar, ever kind ; the voice of grief, of unrelenting despair, never appealed to you in

vain. A feeling of hatred—of revenge—cannot so dreadfully have transformed your nature. Oh ! Lara, in the name of Heaven, reject not my prayer of agony ; you were once my friend—you are still my kinsman.”

“ Your kinsman ! ” bitterly exclaimed Don Alvar, as he beheld the sorrowing Costanza at his feet ; “ I marvel you condescend to bestow the kind appellation on Lara—on the abhorred Lara. Yes, I *was* your friend, and I was, in sooth, honourably requited. Enough—enough !—speak not of my sympathy and generosity, the fountains of those feelings are dried—parched up—with the fever that consumes me. Woman, appeal not to me ; address your fervent prayer to heaven, for there alone can your adored Castro now find pity and protection. Your entreaties, your tears, are in vain ; his doom is fixed.”

“ Barbarous monster ! devoid of all the attributes of man,” exclaimed Costanza, wildly, “ your own death shall follow this murder. Don

Enrique, dear as you may be to him, cannot behold the horrid deed with apathy. No; to him the voice of my despair shall ascend; from him I shall obtain, if not comfort, at least redress."

"You are at liberty, Señora," replied Lara, with haughty calmness, "to apply to Don Enrique so soon as it suits your convenience; but this I tell you, not all the power of the king himself can now save my foe. What the results of his death may be, what the power of your vengeance may produce, I know not; yet this *you* ought to know, that a boon which is not obtained from Lara, by the tears of a woman, can never be wrung by her threats."

"Oh! pardon the unguarded expression of my affliction. I know that fear is foreign to your heart—your pity I claim—your pity you will not deny me, Lara."

Don Alvar moved not, but appeared fixed in his fell resolution. Costanza clasped his knees in agony; yet the fervency of her sorrow could

not sooth him ; for, alas ! that deep sorrow was the strongest proof of her devoted love for his rival.

“ Rise, lady,” he firmly said, “ rise and leave me ; this scene has been already too much protracted : return to your father—let me proceed to the discharge of my duties.”

“ Duties ! oh, heaven ! perchance to pronounce his doom. Oh ! Lara, Lara ! is there no way to save him ? Speak, speak—command me—I will do all—let me not die with agony !”

A short, death-like pause followed,—after which, “ There is one—and only one,” replied Lara, in a more gentle, though still resolute tone of voice.

“ Name it !” cried Costanza, eagerly.

“ Can you not guess it ?” returned the cavalier, fixing a penetrating look, full of import, on the sorrowful Costanza.

A dark cloud seemed to fall over her eyes, —an icy chillness crept through her frame—a

startling idea crossed her excited mind, and she stood in speechless stupor: her eyes were suffused with tears, and her lips opened in painful suspense, expecting the dreaded confirmation of her fears. It was a pause of agony intense—the moment of horror, when an irretrievable doom is about to be fixed; more painful, more appalling, perhaps, than the certainty of the misfortune.

“There is but one means to save him,” repeated Alvar, with much emphasis, “it is in your power, Costanza; I will not strive to persuade you. Speak—decide—but decide quickly.”

Overpowered with agitation, anguish, and terror, the unfortunate lady could scarcely find words to answer.

“I will renounce him for ever!” said she at length, despondingly; “Yes, I will forego every chance of happiness in this world. I will here solemnly, in the name of Heaven, pledge my oath, never more to see him; but to retire to some dismal, inaccessible retreat, where I may linger

out the rest of my miserable existence. 'This sacrifice, oh, Lara! will, I deem, be more than sufficient atonement to your offended pride, your wounded feelings, for the injuries I or he may have caused you.'

"No, by Heaven!" cried Lara, in much agitation, "that sacrifice, as you call it, I never will accept. You intend to evade an answer to a proposition you dread as much as death; but I will have that answer, were it to seal my eternal misery. Speak, Costanza, and plainly speak—will you be mine?"

"Never!" exclaimed Costanza, frantically, gathering in that word all the energy of despair.

"'Tis well! enough!" said Lara, coldly, and turned to depart. The resolute coolness of his manner startled the unfortunate Costanza, as from a dream of horror; she sprang with fearful alacrity after him, and violently seized his arm: he stopped in tranquil suspense.

"Lara, Lara!" said she, in a tone of eager

emotion, “condemn me to the most lingering of all deaths—bid me be your slave—all, all I am willing to perform ; but, oh ! do not desire that I should perjure myself. No—I cannot be false to the solemn vows I have repeatedly made to him. I will renounce his sight for ever—my faith to him I cannot. Oh ! no, no ; the torments of the enemies of God—a life of unceasing anguish—a death of unrelenting despair, must not compel me to the base and fearful apostacy. Oh, Lara ! my friend ! as you expect mercy at the awful tribunal of our God, deny it not to me ; reflect on the baseness of your demand—oh ! it is not in the power of honourable woman to grant it. No—you could not look upon me with confidence, with esteem, were I, in my weakness, to submit. Oh, horror ! shrink, Lara, shrink from those arms which can afford you no other welcome than the smile of resigned despair. Could you recline, in tenderness, on a bosom seared as the barren heath — chilling as the touch of ice—as the breath of death?—and this,

and only this, can the afflicted Costanza offer you, in return for all your love, and all your solicitude. Oh, Lara! pause—and ere such harrowing fate be fulfilled, better for us both to descend into the silence of the grave.”

She ceased—and, trembling, awaited the effect which her eager remonstrance had produced; but Lara’s frenzied passion had now become terrific. Every word which she pronounced was destructive to his hope, and in every look, he read, written in bitter characters, the violence, the entire devotion of her love for his rival. His hatred of him increased in proportion to her affection. He smiled in bitterness and disappointment, his eyes flashed fire, his pale lip quivered, and the veins in his blackening forehead seemed ready to burst with swollen passion.

“Costanza,” he cried, in an agitated voice, “I will trifle no longer; your further expostulations will but aggravate my temper, and injure *his* cause. Decide—in a moment, decide.”

“I have!” she replied, in dreadful calmness.

“To save him?” he inquired, greatly agitated.

“No!” mournfully, but resolutely, she returned, “to see him die, and hate eternally, mortally, his base murderer.”

Don Alvar was thunderstruck at this resolution, no less than at the calm, decided manner in which it was expressed. He earnestly gazed on Costanza, as if unwilling to give credit to her words, but in that beautiful and majestic countenance, he saw her sad determination firmly impressed. For some time he could not speak; he was awed by the nobleness of her deportment, and could not but admire the elevation of her nature. But, alas! the more gifted and accomplished she appeared, the more painfully did he feel her loss.

“Further discussion is now unnecessary,” said he, endeavouring to assume a composure foreign to his feelings; “you have pronounced his sentence of death, and it now only remains to be carried into execution.”

He then made a movement to depart, and to

his utter amazement, Costanza made no effort to arrest his progress. She seemed calmly fixed in her horrid resolution; and as she perceived that further expostulation would be thrown away, she would no longer humble herself before the proud cavalier. He gazed upon her with a mixed sensation of alarm and awe. At that moment, she seemed arrayed in the attributes of an unearthly being; her forehead was set in the horrid calm of woe—a sacred wildness flashed in her dark liquid eyes—she was inspired, like some holy enthusiast of old, equal to the painful sacrifice of all her heart held dearest in life. After a short pause of freezing suspense, Lara again ventured to dally with her resolution.

“You are then determined?” he demanded in agitation.

“I am!” she replied, fixing upon the interrogator a withering look of scorn.

Don Alvar de Lara heard her without a sign of anger or regret; he did not return a single word, but, in a fixed and resolute mood, has-

tily quitted the place. His departure broke the horrid charm that bound the senses of Costanza. She had sealed her lover's doom; a chill of horror crept over her—the hand of death seemed to have benumbed and deprived her of the power of moving. Statue-like, she remained in the apartment, until a sudden noise awoke her from the unnatural trance. A person burst into the apartment—it was her father.

“Costanza!” he eagerly cried, “what are we to expect?”

“He dies!” she answered, gloomily.

“Have all your sorrows pleaded then in vain? Has nought been capable of assuaging his thirst of vengeance?”

“Nothing, my father,” replied Costanza, bitterly, “nothing but a dread sacrifice, to which I shall never be persuaded to submit;” and she burst into a flood of convulsive sorrow.

“What!” exclaimed Don Egas, in amazement, “then is there one way to save his life?”

“Yes!” she cried, dismally, “but he would curse that life, to be purchased at such a price. Ay! he would curse the bestower of the odious gift—I will spare him the horror of that event.”

“Heavens! what mean you, my child—you rave, you exercise no control over your feelings. Mock not the goodness of God thus wantonly; if there is a power to save him, consistent with honour, reject it not; by refusing it, you render yourself a principal in his death.”

“I cannot save him,” replied Costanza, “with honour, Sir: I must break the most solemn of vows. Alas! you can now easily divine that the life of Ferran de Castro is only to be obtained by the perjury of his betrothed bride.”

“Duty—heaven—command to seize upon the means. It is the life of the most noble and deserving of Castilians that you are called upon to save. My child, think also of the fate of your father!”

He did not proceed—a keen look from Cos-

tanza seemed to have frozen his words. She had read, and fearfully anticipated the secret designs of his calculating heart.

“No, Señor!” she firmly and nobly cried, “Costanza de Vargas will not depart from those stern principles of rectitude which, by Ferran de Castro, are regarded as the first of virtues. I am doomed to irretrievable despair, but despair softened by a conviction that every one must respect the sorrows of Costanza de Vargas.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE SACRIFICE.

Credete a chi si ha fatto esperimento
Che questo e'l duol che tutti gl' altri passa.

ARIOSTO.

Oh ! my hard fate ! why did I trust her ever ?
What story is not full of woman's falsehood ?

Old Play.

COSTANZA had taken a strange, and to those who never loved, perhaps, an unaccountable resolution ; but her love for the Castilian was intense and devoted, and in the strength of her tenderness, there was a mixture of high enthusiasm and heroic sentiment, that roused her to deeds which, in other females, might seem extravagant and absurd. She was, indeed, the companion nature had designed for such a man as Don Ferran de Castro. Their love was grounded

on mutual esteem and admiration of their high deserts, heightened by a congeniality of feelings, and by the same sentiments of noble pride and heroism. Yet such a love, though it may appear of a colder nature than that of a more common passion, which never springs from the depth of the heart, and which is, nevertheless, honoured with the name of sympathy—such a love was more intense, deep, and lasting, than is displayed by more worldly and selfish beings. It was this enthusiasm for what was high and noble, that prompted Costanza rather to lose her husband, than break her vows to him. Alas! she knew but too well the character of Ferran; she knew that her heroic resolution would throw a charm even over the close of his last moments. Besides this primary consideration, there was another which greatly influenced the mind of Costanza;—the delicacy of her nature recoiled with abhorrence from an union which she could consider in no other light than as a sort of legal prostitution—for thus she looked upon the surrender of her

person, when her heart could not accompany the gift.

These reflections confirmed her more deeply in her determination ; but her father, with his usual pliability of disposition, had now perceived the incalculable advantages to be derived from an alliance with Lara. The cause of Don Pedro was now considered, by the old cavalier, as entirely hopeless, and it would certainly be a stroke of masterly policy to secure the good graces and protection of the favourite of the new king of Castile. Besides, in every point of view, an union between Don Alvar and Costanza appeared highly advantageous, and Don Egas utterly forgot all his former inconsistencies, intent, as he always was, on the prosecution of his worldly designs.

This time-serving disposition was a new source of misery to his sorrowing daughter. He was constantly near her—urging her to accede to the wishes of Lara, and bringing forward the most strenuous arguments to convince her reason, and

conquer her prejudices. He even strove to alarm her conscience, by making her believe that God and the world would look upon her as a murderess; but all these remonstrances were employed in vain to turn Costanza from her purpose—they merely added to her misfortunes and sorrows. In the present exalted state of her feelings, it was impossible that such arguments, dictated by the most selfish reasons, could make any impression on her mind;—nor, indeed, was her father the most apt of logicians, in the eyes of his daughter, in the present case; for she, naturally enough, attributed his eager solicitude to that worldly speculation for which his character was noted. Persuasion was therefore unavailing, and Don Egas, struck at once with anger and astonishment at his daughter's decision, no longer attempted to expostulate, fully convinced of the inefficacy of his remonstrances.

In deep concern the old cavalier turned away, and endeavoured to intercede with Lara in

behalf of the prisoner. It was in vain: Don Alvar, as soon as the intention of Don Egas was made known, refused to listen to his entreaties, but, in a firm tone, declared that Don Ferran, ere another hour elapsed, would cease to breathe: indeed there were already evident symptoms of Lara's inflexibility, in the bustle of preparation for the approaching execution. An ill-boding murmur filled the air; even some of the low people appeared to feel a degree of sympathy; but this was smothered in the clamours for his death which prevailed among Don Alvar's partizans. Those who were deeply interested in the success of Don Enrique, very naturally exerted all their endeavours to remove out of their way so dangerous a rival as Ferran de Castro. Though no real crime could be laid to his charge, it is no difficult matter, in times of turbulence and confusion, to find a pretext to palliate a political crime.

It was thus, in the present moment, the interest of the party of Trastamara seemed to require

the death of the Castilian ; his death was, therefore, readily resolved upon. Nothing was easier than to frame an offence, for when men are firmly resolved upon the execution of some deed, the pretext follows of course. The Castilian was declared to be guilty of many offences against the new king ; he was accused of treason in having betrayed the secret of the conspirators, with whom he never was acquainted ; and, finally, he bore the odium of being one of the counsellors of Don Pedro ; and it was supposed that, at his instigation, many of the tyrant's enormities had been committed.

Meantime, Costanza, when her first heroic enthusiasm had subsided, and the calm voice of reason began to prevail, perceived in their true colours all the horrors with which she was threatened in the death of Ferran. It was a misfortune which required all her energies to support. Tenderness began to steal over her pride and soften its asperity. Her excitation was quenched, and in its place there rose the

purser flame of female love and devotion. Costanza's resolution seemed to relax, but still she silenced every rising suggestion of weakness, and summoned all her energies to the fearful task.

In this dreadful state she was startled by the entrance of her father, who burst into the place with looks of real terror and dismay.

"He dies!" he cried, in strong agitation—"all hope is lost! and I must look on my daughter as his *murderess*."

"Barbarous man!" exclaimed Costanza—"he does not then relent! he can rejoice in the fate of a noble and brave foe! Oh, base treachery! and it is to such a man, you, father, would see your child united!"

The sound of trumpets was now heard—the dismal tolling of bells succeeded, and the ominous knell wrung Costanza's heart. That awful monitor had more power over her feelings than the threats of Lara, or the supplications of her father. It told that the dreadful moment was

at hand. The murmur among the people increased : one or two priests hurried through the streets with busy looks. The fate of Don Ferran seemed inevitable. A sudden terror came over Costanza ; her whole frame was convulsed ; an icy chillness shot through all her veins, and curdled her very blood : her resolution was fast yielding to the pleadings of her womanly nature. An agonizing groan burst from her inmost bosom ; it told her utter misery and despair : seized by a sudden impulse, she flew out of the place. At that moment, Don Alvar de Lara stood before her. It was a dreadful moment ; the struggle of her feelings was overwhelming—the horror of the present danger repulsed every other consideration.

“ Oh ! save him ! ” she cried in despair to Lara—“ I will be yours ! ”

The agonizing, irrevocable words were pronounced, and Costanza’s mind suddenly acquired a frightful calmness ; she had nothing now to dread. The constant and painful excitement of

her heart was hushed to repose, and all her fears and hopes withered. Lara, half-supporting her feeble frame, led her into the apartment she had just quitted, and offered some words of consolation, which were indignantly repulsed. Don Egas was pained at the miserable state in which he beheld his beloved child, but his affliction ceased when he pictured to himself the advantages which, in a worldly point of view, were likely to result from this union.

Meantime, Costanza remained in a state of wretched apathy, like one who had accomplished a fearful task, that sealed her misery for ever, and which it was now out of her power to recal. A dismal silence ensued: the sacrifice was deplored by every one of the party. Even Lara seemed as if unable to utter a word: the sombre tranquillity of Costanza had affected him more powerfully than her tears and entreaties. He clearly perceived that mortal aversion was the only feeling that would mark their wretched union. Yet, like every other man under the

influence of over-powering love, this dread was more than counterbalanced by that feeling of vanity, which makes him hope he will ultimately gain the affections of the woman he loves by kindness and perseverance.

“Costanza!” said Lara, “soon as the shadows of night envelop the earth, you shall open the prison-gates of Castro and his escudero, and give them life and liberty. I will feign some pretext to delay their execution. In the present state of the popular excitement against him, it would be imprudent to attempt his delivery during the day. Don Ferran shall have the means of reaching Almagro in safety; the nearest town still in subjection to Pedro. If there be any thing else you may desire, and I can bestow, speak—it shall be immediately granted.”

“Thanks, Señor, for your condescension,” said Costanza, bitterly—“I have *now* neither boon to desire nor danger to apprehend.”

Lara ventured not upon a second intrusion; he prudently forbore striving to ingratiate him-

self in Costanza's favour. He nevertheless soon entered into a very amicable conversation with her father: this, indeed, was no difficult task; for Don Egas was always wonderfully well disposed to interchange words with those from whose power and influence he had something to expect in the promotion of his ambitious schemes; the old cavalier very industriously tried to render himself agreeable to his future son-in-law; and he lost no occasion to speak and address him in the terms of relationship. Besides, he was so sceptical on the article of woman's eternal constancy, that he felt persuaded Costanza would ultimately reconcile herself to her situation, after which, calmness would succeed; and, finally, the attention and kindness of her husband effacing former impressions, would establish him firmly in her affections.

These pleasing delusions the old cavalier entertained in all sincerity of heart, for to him they appeared perfectly natural, and he built all his theorems upon the rational principle of the

mutability of human things, and the progressive decay of every object in this sublunary world. He felt, therefore, by no means apprehensive as to the results of Costanza's sorrow, though he might, at present, be moved by its apparent intensity. Whilst Costanza waited in apathy for the fearful consummation of the sacrifice, and Don Egas fondly indulged in the smiling prospects of grandeur that opened before him, Ferran de Castro, loaded with irons, expected in an obscure dungeon the issue of his fate. The good Pimiento was not easily reconciled to his doom, not from any feeling of pusillanimity, but because he found the present proceedings no way analogous to the spirit of chivalry; he had, therefore, passed the tedious hours in recounting the various feats of his favourite heroes, and racking his brain to find out examples to justify their imprisonment. But in the whole range of his legendary lore, there was no parallel to the heinousness of Don Alvar de Lara's present behaviour.

The Castilian's thoughts were very differently occupied. The uncertainty of Don Pedro's fate kept his mind in a state of constant excitement, and made him forgetful of his own danger. Besides, though he well knew the violent temper of Lara, and his vindictive disposition ; though he was acquainted with the ceremony of a mock trial, and had been prepared to look upon his death as certain ; yet his noble mind repulsed the idea that his rival could ungenerously avail himself of his power of inflicting vengeance. He even entertained the flattering hopes, that ere long he should be released from his confinement. He bestowed, therefore, but little attention to the danger with which his life seemed to be threatened. The safety of the king, the influence which this untoward event might have in protracting his union with Costanza, were the two thoughts that alternately took possession of his imagination. No, Don Ferran trembled not for his life ; but, a painful and undefinable feeling, an ominous presentiment of some impending

catastrophe distracted his mind, whenever he strove to look with fond expectation towards the future.

Thus passed that eventful day, and it was succeeded by a night, whose deepening darkness augmented the gloomy tone of the Castilian's thoughts. To the noisy clamour of the populace, and the various warlike sounds that had reached him in his prison, a dismal, a boding silence had now succeeded. The good escudero had addressed to Heaven a fervent and long prayer, in which his master had piously joined ; and they were both preparing to compose themselves to rest in the lowly beds, when they were startled by the shrill sound of the prison bolts.

“ Pimiento, art thou awake ? dost thou not hear a noise ? ”

“ *Dios nos defienda, Señor !* ” (Heaven defend us !) quoth the escudero, crossing himself, “ sure enough the hour is arrived, and we must prepare fearlessly to meet our fate. I suppose we shall be strangled in secret.”

“No, my good friend, let us hope for the best.”

“From the previous conduct of Don Alvar de Lara, I should rather be tempted to augur the worst. Ah! Señor, I have been reflecting on the adventure of Count Saldaña in the castle of Luna, when the emissaries of the barbarous King Alfonso came to screw out the good old cavalier’s eyes, despite of the services of his son Bernardo ;(1) now, who knows but a similar barbarity is in contemplation against us !”

“Hush ! the inner gate opens, and our surmises will soon be at an end.”

The sombre light of the single lamp that illumined the prison, would not permit them to distinguish any object at a short distance, but rather tended to augment the palpable gloom of the place. Yet, scarcely had the door been opened, when it became suddenly lighted by the red glaring splendour of a large torch, carried by the jailer. Soon after him, another figure made its appearance. To the wondering eyes of

the prisoners, it appeared to be a female, but the feelings of the Castilian seemed to partake of something superhuman, when he recognized in the form of the nocturnal visitor, his own adored Costanza.

For some time he seemed spell-bound to the spot ; he could not breathe nor move, nor utter a word ; so fixed was he rooted to the earth, that even the odious clanking of his chain ceased. In a pause of strange suspense, he fixed his eyes on the person of his betrothed, and such appeared his delight, that he was afraid by a single movement to demolish the fairy work of fancy, for to such he ascribed the pleasing illusion that blest his sight ; the reality of the scene was soon confirmed. The jailer in perfect silence proceeded towards Don Ferran, and struck off his irons, an operation which was next undertaken in behalf of the old escudero. Again the Castilian gazed bewildered on his beloved Costanza, as if to request the solution of the present enigma. But to his dismay he perceived that she laboured

under some powerful emotion ; she stood aloof, nor when she saw her lover unshackled from his irons, did she rush into his expecting arms ; on the contrary, when she approached, she seemed to shrink from his embrace. The perplexity of the Castilian redoubled. He foresaw that there was some mystery, but his mind was far from guessing the horrid truth.

“ Speak, Costanza,” he at length said, unable any longer to support the fearful suspense, “ what means this ?”

“ Thou art free, Don Ferran,” she answered composedly, but in a thrilling ominous tone, that pierced the Castilian’s heart.

“ And is it to you, my beloved,” he continued, “ that I owe my liberty ?”

“ Alas ! yes,” she answered fearfully, “ but you have no time to spare, you must depart immediately, a thousand dangers surround you. Begone, Ferran, and may Heaven guard you !”

“ Costanza, my own betrothed ! your words are fraught with direful presages, you seem to

elude my warm embrace ; sadness lies in thy look, and in thy every tone ; thy cheek is hueless, and thy eye is no longer lighted up by the smile of joy ! Oh ! Costanza, speak, unfold the horrid mystery. You bid me go, but from this gloomy abode I will not depart, until I learn my fate from your own mouth, however blasting the intelligence !”

“ In the name of God, for the sake of *him* you serve so faithfully, do not neglect this opportunity of regaining your liberty ; the moments fly, they are too precious to be thus lost. Again I conjure you, stay not a moment !”

“ Whence this eagerness ? I will depart, Costanza, but so Heaven befriend me, I will not go without you. No, whatever be my future destiny, from this moment we must never separate. But you tremble, you turn from me your sorrowful eyes, Costanza—speak ! trifle no longer with my agonizing heart—wilt thou not follow me ?”

“ No, Ferran,” she answered firmly, “ I cannot, I must not !”

“ Must not? and is it from *thee* I hear these words? 'Tis well !—Now, some blasting light begins to illumine the frightful prospect before me. Has your father again, in his abundant prudence, forbidden you to follow your betrothed, because his name is proscribed? If Don Egas so far forgets his honour, from you, at least, I should not expect this dereliction of principle. No, no, Costanza, I wrong you; your love and duty to your parent have caused this inward struggle of your feelings. But it must not be; I claim you now as my promised bride; fate has too often thwarted our love, and protracted the accomplishment of our wishes. Let us from this moment put it out of its power any longer to cross our path, by never more separating.”

A harrowing sigh was the only answer that Costanza made to this proposal; her agitation increased; it was evident that some frightful

secret tormented her mind, the disclosure of which seemed wholly to overpower her ; but the painful anxiety of Ferran could not brook any further delay. He advanced eagerly toward Costanza, but to his utter dismay she disengaged herself from his arms, with a sort of desperate agony. Castro stopped short, and brushed the cold drops from his throbbing brow : he endeavoured to compose himself, then in a deadly calm tone of voice—

“ Lady,” he said, “ it is clear that you wish to avoid me—I will not force myself upon your inclination ; but I have, at least, the right of ascertaining the cause to which I am to attribute so unnatural and unexpected a change.”

“ Oh ! Ferran, I deserve your bitter reproaches—fly—fly me—I can no longer, as once, pledge words and vows of love with you without becoming guilty.”

“ Woman !” thundered the Castilian, in agony, “ what mean you ? explain ! finish the

terrible avowal, and blast my existence for ever !”

“ In the name of Heaven, calm yourself, and leave me—avoid me ; consign me to death and misery !” Then, after a pause, in a broken voice she continued—“ I am another’s ! I am the wedded wife of * * * !” and, falling on her knees, she clasped her hands in agony.

Ferran heard, but saw no more ; a film came over his eyes ; a stupor benumbed his every feeling ; an unearthly cry seemed to come from his very soul, but his horror was too overpowering to allow him the power of utterance. He cast a wild look on the afflicted Costanza—gazed on her for a moment in horrid vacancy—then, in the fearful mood of a maniac, he uttered an indistinct hysteric laugh, and repulsed her from him. His frightful situation alarmed Costanza, but she trembled to increase his agony by an effort to console him. The poor escudero covered his face with his hands, and sobbed

audibly ; whilst the inhuman jailer saw the group unmoved, or rather felt apprehensive for the consequences of the scene if it were prolonged ; he accordingly, in a gruff voice, observed :

“ Señores, this must be ended. Do you wish to depart in peace, or be favoured again with *your* chain ? And as for you, Senor Don Ferran, I marvel you regret the loss of *one esposa*, when you can immediately command *two** in this snug temple of love.”

The vulgar joke, and the insensibility of the jailer, awoke the Castilian from his horrid trance.

“ Yes, I must depart,” he said, bitterly, “ for I know not where my feelings would at present lead me. The hated truth is now revealed. Cowardly woman ! Thou whom, in my very fondness, I had judged so superior to thy trials ! More pitiful and weak than the meanest of thy sex, thou hast basely sold thyself to a villain—

* Manacles are also called esposas.

ay ! sold thyself, for by no other name can I characterize this union. Thou hast sold thyself to purchase my hateful liberty—a curse be on thy guilt !”

“A curse ? no—no !” interrupted Costanza, “forgive me ! I appeal to thy generous heart and elevation of mind. In the brilliant path of glory, let the image of her who has offended be eclipsed, and in the din of war let her sighs and lamentation be drowned for ever ! Go, Ferran, my friend, thy king commands thy services ; summon thy wonted resolution to meet our fate as becomes thy high spirit. Be happy, and forget me !”

“Forget thee ! thinkest thou my heart is false and weak as thine ? No, woman ! no—I cannot forget thee, for the wound thou hast inflicted is too deep ever to be forgotten ! Mock me not with words of consolation ; from thee they but add a rankling venom, that poisons my very soul. Forget thee ! ah, could I but tear thy image from my breast ; could I dispel the

recollection of thy former love and virtue, I might then be accessible to the hope of comfort. But, false as thou hast been, my memory cannot cease to dwell upon thy baneful charms, and the many virtues and excellences which I once fondly fancied were thine. The dreams of love are dissolved—thou hast made me wretched for ever ! But Heaven forgive thy error ! I will not curse thee—I will not add to the pangs that must lacerate thy heart, if thou hast but one honourable feeling left—I will not curse thee, poor, deluded thing ; thy curse is laid upon thy soul, and goes with thee to the grave ! Farewell, for ever !”

“ Oh ! Ferran, Ferran, leave me not thus ; think, think on my misery, my future agony, my ceaseless despair. ’Tis to a life of affliction intense, to a night of gloom without any ray of morning, to an eternity of pain, I have condemned myself—pity, pity my situation ! If I have been guilty, false to my vows, oh ! reflect, it was for thy sake—to save thy life.”

“Cease, woman, cease, and add not insult to thy guilt,” he interrupted, in convulsive agitation; “that excuse might come with grace from one of the weakest of thy sex—but from thee I was not prepared to expect it.”

“Alas! what choice had I left me?”

“To see me die!” sternly replied the Castilian. “You knew full well I would triumph in my death—that I could bear its horrors, better than thy abasement—but, oh! I was dreadfully deluded. In thee methought I had found a miracle of excellence, a holy incarnation of female truth and purity—ay! a heavenly spirit, with the best attributes of thy gentle sex. I thought I was in these most blest; and now I find thou art but—a woman!”

A bitter smile spread over his flushed features, which suddenly became calm in desolate repose; he stood speechless, his hands crossed on his breast, his penetrating eyes fixed on the ground; he appeared to struggle hard with his despair, and gathering energy for some powerful resolu-

tion. The wretched Costanza dreaded more this unnatural calmness than the wildest ebullition of his passion ; she made one more effort to conquer his dread and stubborn silence.

“ Oh ! Castro,” she exclaimed, in deep sorrow, “ in the name of Heaven, let us separate in peace. Perhaps my offence is great ; but ah ! reflect on the despairing weight of my retribution. Consider thy part is far easier to support than mine. It is a deadly sacrifice to which I vowed myself ; and, alas ! no cheering halo of hope or content can reflect a beam upon my misery ; but thou, Ferran, noble and generous as thou art, wilt yet live to be distinguished and loved as before. Thou art called to scenes congenial to thy daring spirit. Oh ! pity my misery—do not thus cruelly repulse thy once beloved friend.”

At these words, Costanza’s tears began to flow in streams, and, with imploring looks, she gazed in her lover’s face, as if taking her last earthly farewell. He felt the holiness of that last appeal.

“ Since here we part for ever,” he exclaimed, in great emotion, “ it is meet I should also part with every token that may recal thee to my bleeding heart. Look here ! it is thy scarf, Costanza ! given as a pledge of love and constancy. I will no longer keep a gage that was to me a source of joys and hopes unutterable. In moments of danger it increased my energy ; in the hour of hope, it heightened the brilliancy of my expectations. It has been the silent confidant of all my thoughts at night ; during the day, in the camp, and in the court, it has been my inseparable companion, my greatest comforter, for it told me incessantly of all the heavenly treasure I possessed in thy heart. Yea, it repeated continually a tale of boundless love, of perfection, of heavenly merit, never known before. Amidst the keenest pangs of misfortune, I looked upon the powerful charm, and I was happy ; in the night of sorrow, in the gloom of a dungeon, this magic token imparted light through the dismal shadows of adversity : but now the charm is

dissolved, it is turned into a bitter scorpion's sting. I will cast it away like a treacherous, tainted thing, whose touch would be worse than death ;—take it, and farewell !”

As he spoke, he tore the rich scarf, and threw it at the feet of Costanza. But scarcely had he accomplished this sacrifice, and severed the last link that bound him to his early love, than a fearful dizziness came over him : his large, full, melancholy eyes were dimmed with tears ; his knees trembled ; and his senses seemed steeped in the very bitterness of despair.

“ Support me, my good friend,” he said, turning to Pimiento ; “ this weakness shames me—it must not be—let us depart. Farewell, Costanza, once more, and Heaven forgive thee !” He turned, and abruptly left the place, supported by his afflicted escudero.

Costanza saw him depart, more in sorrow than in anger ; for when the first burst of frenzied passion, of deep felt indignation, had a little subsided, the noble nature of the Castilian

triumphed. The wretchedness of the now desolate Costanza was exquisite; she stood the personification of despair, looking in the direction that her lover had disappeared. Her cheek was colourless, her lips slightly trembled, and a large tear hung on her eyelid; her hands were clasped in desolate tranquillity—she could not weep—her sighs could find no utterance. She seemed as if spell bound by some horrid vision, whose deadly influence continues some time after the lurid phantom has vanished. In this gloomy state of apathy she remained a moment; all her thoughts seemed to be deadened—all her feelings benumbed; she could not speak, nor move. It was the ecstasy of woe—unutterable desolation of soul.

But soon she was awakened from this painful trance, by the hoarse voice of the jailer, inviting her to leave the dismal place. She passively obeyed: and, bearing the flaming torch in his hand, he conducted her out of that den of misery. In listless melancholy she made her way to her

father ; but as she moved along, and the cool air of night breathed upon her burning temples, she gradually acquired composure, and her mind resumed that tone of firmness, now more than ever necessary to her existence. A flood of tears came to her relief ; and after this gush of sorrow, she resolutely turned her thoughts to the task of deciding on some plan, applicable to her present state.

She determined to combat instead of indulging in her grief. The struggle was painful ; but she felt a proud and consoling hope that she should in time be able, not, alas ! to banish entirely the object of her fondest affection from her memory, but to gain a proper firmness for fulfilling the duties which her new situation as a wife imposed. The die was irrevocably cast—no sorrow, no human power could recal the fatal vows she had pronounced, nor mitigate the wretchedness of her lot. She strongly felt this melancholy conviction, and accordingly schooled her mind to

undergo with dignity the trials that awaited her.

In this train of thought, Don Egas met her, and endeavoured to offer what consolation he could; but Costanza dismissed the attempt with a woeful smile. Her heart felt indignant that happiness should be expected to crown her existence. No; she was now like the seared tree of autumn—the trunk remained to bear the storms of winter; but the leafy greenness and beauty had been for ever blighted and withered.

CHAPTER V.

THE MEETING.

Words would but wrong the gratitude I owe you :
Should I begin to speak, my soul's so full,
That I should talk of nothing else all day.

OTWAY.

Yield not to cankering grief, nor deem
The tree that bends before the blast
Unrooted, though it so may seem ;
'Twill flourish when the storm is past.

ST. JOHN'S *Abdallah*.

SCARCELY had Ferran de Castro reached the outward gate of the prison, when he perceived a man, who advanced towards him in a friendly manner. In his appearance he was of middle rank, and a stranger. He soon, however, made known the object of his intrusion.

“ Follow me, Señor,” he said, in a cautious

under tone ; “ the horses are ready at a short distance from this place.” The Castilian and his escudero obeyed in silence, for Ferran immediately perceived that this was the guide, doubtless selected to conduct him to a place of safety.

The night was dark ; a chilling breeze had risen ; no sound was heard ; and every thing conveyed a death-like feeling, that accorded well with the desolation of the cavalier’s feelings. He moved slowly : and having at length arrived at the chosen spot, he mounted a strong horse, and rode silently away, accompanied by the faithful Pimiento and the guide. A dismal gloom seemed spread over the country—it was like the stillness of the grave ; only the solitary, mournful tramp of the horses broke the awful silence ; and the excited fancy of the Castilian imbibed an additional shade of horror from the melancholy impressions which the time and place were calculated to produce.

In this manner they proceeded through a country laid bare and desolate by the ravages

of war. No sign of life was discernible: at intervals, indeed, a straggling, miserable hut appeared before them, but it was ruinous and tenantless; for in the terrors of civil strife, every one endeavoured to seek concealment in the protection of populous towns; even vegetation itself seemed dead. The peasantry, the serfs, had suffered greatly from these domestic commotions. The ambition of the grandees and the higher clergy had converted every thing over which they had dominion into so many tools to forward their ambitious views. The feudatories of the several lords were compelled to take up arms, notwithstanding the cause in which they were to fight might be against their conscience and inclination.

Indeed, in those days of absolute feudalism, very little attention was paid to the fate of the people, who were led like cattle to the slaughter, to support the rival pretensions and ambition of a few. The gigantic power of the grandees, and the ample means they had of disturbing the

country at their good pleasure, had been seen from the beginning by the acute judgment of Don Pedro; and hence it had been one of his strenuous endeavours to curb and curtail that influence by all the resources in his power. We have already hinted that this formed one of the primary causes of that sanguinary and unnatural contest between the king and his bastard brother.

Thoughts like these now flitted across the mind of the Castilian, and served to divert his mind from the afflicting object of his present meditations. His individual sorrows were for a season absorbed in the contemplation of the misfortunes of his country. Thus the night wore away, and with the first dawn of day the town of Almagro was seen opening to his sight, enveloped in the morning mist. The travellers made haste to reach the spot, for the guide expressed his fears that, should he be recognized by any of the numerous loiterers and spies who haunted every path, he should dearly rue the charitable office

he had been performing. The horses were set to their full speed, and in less than an hour the Castilian found himself and his escudero at the entrance of Almagro, the guide having previously returned to his destination.

The sentinels challenged them, and Ferran giving the appropriate answer, entered the place, which appeared in a state of the utmost excitation. The streets, notwithstanding the early hour, were crowded with bustling groups; some armed, some merely discussing the chances of the war, and the probability of Don Pedro's retaining possession of the crown. A messenger had arrived a short time before Ferran de Castro, with most alarming intelligence of the state of the country round Toledo, and the little probability there was of this city being able to withstand the siege much longer. This produced a great sensation in the public mind, and their countenances produced a curious contrast, as they endeavoured to conceal their apprehension under a show of courage.

Some of the most notorious talkers were holding forth, at a most preposterous rate, to their good-natured listeners, who had acquired a habit of nodding assent to every thing, without understanding a word of what was said. These extempore and gratuitous haranguers are to be met with in every city, town, and village, ready to discuss all subjects, from the marriage of the rich farmer, to the probability of a revolution; they have obtained a deep knowledge of every subject, and very good naturedly retail their stores to the less enlightened, who are anxious to acquire information.

These good orators have, moreover, their regular forums, from which they deliver their oracles, whether the said forums be the corner of some public square, or the barber's shop. The most striking characteristic in this gallant list of orators, is the warm and reckless courage of their nature; they deal out executions and banishments, by thousands, and talk in such an off-hand manner, as almost to frighten their

more pacific countrymen out of their wits. Then, by some unaccountable mischance, it invariably happens that when matters come to blows, these tremendous heroes of the tongue are nowhere to be found, until the storm blows over, when they resume their wonted avocations, with undiminished spirit and energy, just as if nothing had happened.

Ferran de Castro, as he entered the town, soon perceived the state of things, and inwardly bewailed the mischief which these self-constituted orators occasioned, by inspiring the most ridiculous fears and absurd speculations. Under the control of the most agonizing feelings, he was conducted to the habitation of Don Pedro. It presented a very hostile aspect ; all the better part of the troops were congregated on the spot, and surrounded the mansion. The Castilian was astonished at the sight, for he could not reconcile the present measures of precaution with the king's former recklessness for his safety. Some sudden change, he thought, must have been

wrought on the king's mind, or the imminency of the danger must at length have roused him to the means of self-preservation. He found Don Pedro leisurely pacing a saloon, with an unusual display of calmness ; his countenance seemed divested of that settled gloom which his repeated crosses and misfortunes had implanted there. Ferran de Castro was as much struck at these symptoms, as by the number of soldiers who guarded the place. As soon as the king perceived his faithful attendant, an unaffected expression of joy diffused itself over his features.

“ ‘Thank Heaven ! thou art safe,” he cried ; “ now I shall be prepared for the worst. ‘The only circumstance that pained my mind, was the idea of the ruin which might have followed thy last proof of fidelity to me. As for myself, I had a narrow escape. I was chased, like a hart, to the very gates of this town, and only owed my safety to the fleetness of my horse. However, I shall not forget the kind intentions of my pur-

suers, one of whom, I think, I recognized—it was Don Juan de Silva. Ah ! good Don Juan,” he added, with a sardonic smile, “ the time may yet come when I shall repay you by as hard a chase : but you shall be hunted by mastiffs ; so Heaven only preserve me for that moment ! And now, my good Don Ferran, tell me the circumstances of thy flight. No doubt, Costanza, like a lady true, contrived, in her woman’s wit, how to secure the object of her fond adoration !”

Here the king touched upon the most tender chord, and it vibrated painfully. The words sent poisoned daggers to the Castilian’s heart. The deadly paleness of his countenance, and his convulsed frame, bore witness to his emotion. The king gazed on him in astonishment, and eagerly sought a solution of this enigma.

“ How is this, Don Ferran ? Some unusual misfortune must have happened. It is no trifle that can occasion such terrible demonstrations of agony in the stout heart of the first of Castilian soldiers.”

“Señor, spare me an explanation which must add to my wretchedness,” answered Ferran, in agitation. “It is no time now for dwelling upon individual sorrows; more important matters claim our attention. Let us provide against the dangers that menace your crown.”

“No, by Santiago!” cried the king, with warmth, “this mystery must be explained. It is obvious that thy present distress, whatever it be, was encountered by thy devotedness to my person: and now, as a king, as a friend, I require to be made acquainted with the secret.”

The Castilian uttered a deep and heart-rending sigh, whilst a smile of sadness diffused itself over his countenance. He could no longer oppose Don Pedro’s wishes; and, accordingly, summoning to his aid all the energy of his mind, he gave a faithful, though succinct account of his adventures, since his separation from his master.

At the end of the recital, Don Pedro seemed stunned with the information. His expressive

features evinced more sympathy than was to be expected from his habitual disposition. For a moment, he was rivetted to the spot—he cast a look full of sorrow and gratitude on the gallant cavalier, and, in mournful silence, contemplated the sad effect which rigid adherence to his duty had produced.

“ Ferran, my friend, my good Castilian,” he said, with emotion, “ you are unfortunate, in sooth—and it is by me that all the miseries of thy life have been occasioned. Thy services have been beyond the power of gratitude or reward—but, oh ! this last sacrifice is dreadful. I was far from surmising the result of your self-devotion, or never, no, never would I have consented to have seen the only true Castilian made so supremely wretched on my account.”

Saying this, he took Ferran’s hand, and pressed it with emotion.

“ It is idle,” he then continued, “ to talk of gratitude now, for I can do nothing—no, not even resent the insult of the most paltry of my

subjects; but, even if I were firmly seated on my throne, my favours could never compensate for what thou hast suffered for my cause, and the greatness of this last painful sacrifice!"

"My liege," nobly replied the Castilian, "no recompense is owing for having done my duty. Ferran de Castro never looked for a reward; his friendship or his enmity were never to be purchased; they flow spontaneously from his heart; and from that heart, pierced and torn as it now is—from that heart alone, he expects a recompense, beyond what power and wealth can bestow—the inward consciousness of having acted as it behoved a Castilian, and the untainted lineage from which I am sprung."

"Your heroism, my good Señor," returned the king, "is the severest satire upon my own conduct towards you: with shame I reflect on the ingratitude with which I repaid your services when I was in power. Alas! I have entailed on myself the curse of vulgar men. It is only in misfortune that they can appreciate the holy

devotedness of friendship, or set a value on generous and heroic achievements. But thou hast stood the ordeal nobly, Don Ferran de Castro, and thy own conscience ensures thee the best reward. From me," he added, "it would be folly, in sooth, to expect aught but the deadly curse which attaches to my person, and whose malignant influence thou hast continually felt. However, indulge your sad fancy with the pleasing prospect, that the day of retribution will come. Yes, my good Ferran, the day will come, when you may deal a severe, though merited justice on the miscreant's head. No torment will be sufficient to counterbalance his offences. He is a rank traitor, on whose death my mind has more than once fondly dwelt. Until that glorious time arrive, that pleasure which cold, foolish mortals denominate cruelty and revenge—and which I call the sacred joy arising from justice—until that glorious time arrive, you can revel in the image of the misery which his union with your beloved must pro-

duce. Think, Ferran, think that he is united for life with one who must continually fill his heart with all the misery of hatred, jealousy, or indifference. The fiend of suspicion will haunt his fevered imagination—the monster of jealousy, I say, will entwine its serpents round his pillow—the canker-worm of disappointment will prey upon his vitals—and when she smiles, he will see deception lurk in its softest charm—and in each tear he will perceive the damning proof of his utter and hopeless desolation. Each sigh will come over him as a tainted and pestilential breeze, that will for ever stint the growth of every budding hope and joy. Believe me, Ferran, thy vile foe can now experience no greater curse than the one he has inflicted upon himself, by uniting with a woman whose affections were devotedly placed on another. Such an offence, if a man be not a dolt, carries invariably its own punishment.”

Ferran de Castro was struck with the earnestness of the king's manner, and the strange way

in which he strove to administer consolation, by addressing himself to the worst feelings of human nature. He was somewhat shocked at the vividness with which he painted the joys of revenge, though he would at that moment dart upon his enemy, were propitious fate to place him before his sight. Ferran now endeavoured to turn the conversation from a subject so painful, by interrogating the king on the present posture of affairs, and the line of conduct proper to be adopted.

“I have received,” said the king, calmly, “most alarming accounts, and I am well aware of the bad effects they have produced amongst these craven-hearted townsmen; yet some inward voice bids me not despair: and, strange, Ferran, now, in my reduced state, I feel more confidence than when I was lately master of a spirited army, and backed by the assistance of the Moorish king.”

“And yet, Señor,” observed the Castilian,

“I find your residence strongly guarded—a circumstance to which you before paid little attention.”

“And I do so still,” replied Don Pedro; “I have no hand in this measure of precaution. No—it originates in the idle rumour, that this very town is on the point of revolt. My faithful adherents have deemed it expedient to provide against what may happen. I tremble not for my life, for, when a crown is lost, what boots a wretched existence to me? Nero,” he added, sarcastically, “to whom my good people, in their wisdom, have thought proper to compare me, was loth to lose his, and acted vilely. Don Pedro of Castile shall shew a little more spirit ere he die!”

“Far distant be that calamity from us!” interrupted Ferran. “But whence, Don Pedro, the confidence you feel in our present position? Are there any new resources to depend upon?”

“To my knowledge, none!” replied the king,

with composure, "and all my flattering hopes are founded on a dream, an inward presentiment that cheers my heart with better prospects."

"Alas!" said Ferran, "and is it only a dream, then?"

"Only a dream! and why," cried Don Pedro, emphatically, "in the present abandonment of all my subjects—in the total wreck of all my hopes—should I sooner trust to the support of man, than to the happy presentiment of fate and fortune? No, there is oftentimes a truth in dreams, far superior to human promises of aid. From man I have but little to expect—the lower class, whose rights I have protected against the encroachments of the clergy and aristocracy, will not help me, because they are paltry spirits, blinded by ignorance—incapable of appreciating the higher objects of my policy. From the ambitious nobles I can expect no mercy; their rapacious spirit can ill brook the iron hand that boldly strives to curb their power. My allies,

the Moors, have given a fair specimen of the aid which a king is to expect from mercenaries, with small hopes of booty—they will turn round, and fly at the first onset. Thus, you see, my good friend, I am right in trusting only to the caprices of fortune. Here I will not long remain—my inactivity may increase the audacity of the rebellious Trastamara.”

“And yet,” said Ferran, mournfully, “we cannot oppose his triumphant progress, with our slender troops.”

“We can but try,” answered the king, with a grim smile.

“There would be madness in the attempt, Señor.”

“To-morrow we set out,” said Don Pedro, in a firmer tone.

“Your will is law; but pause ere you resolve, my liege. Perchance, by a longer sojourn in this place, our troops, as well as our resources, may be augmented. It would be folly thus to throw away the last chance of success.”

“ Ay, Sir,” said Don Pedro, “ you only look at the favourable side of the question ; but think that a delay may produce just the contrary effects. The fears of our remaining followers may increase by inaction : meantime, the bastard will increase his successes, and lessen our means of resistance. No, no, by Heaven !” he added, with fire, “ in this hateful suspense, I cannot—I will not remain any longer. It is more intolerable than all the horrors of my fate. I will know that fate. I feel an inward craving for it. Nothing can allay it—nothing but a prompt and final destruction of my hopes, or my fears.”

Ferran de Castro perceived the inefficacy of combating a resolution so firmly fixed—and though he inwardly grieved at the dismal prospect which affairs presented, he, in some measure, seemed reconciled to the argument of the king. As there appeared but small probability of being enabled to increase their resources, a prompt and decisive step might forward their

cause, which, in the desperate posture of things, was only attended with new and disheartening disappointments. Besides, though the feelings of the Castilian were all dark and gloomy, yet, with the natural superstition, arising in cases of great emergency, he clung to the presentiment of the king, and placed confidence in some unexpected turn of fortune. Besides, what had he to fear? The dream of happiness was for ever fled, and in the wilderness of his heart, there was now no green spot for the growth of any new feelings. His final separation from Costanza had plunged him into that state of hopeless wretchedness, that, to be counteracted, requires, even from the most heroic minds, a strong volition and active exertions.

The Castilian, therefore, felt now a keen longing for the soul-stirring interest of battle, in order to divert his thoughts from the baneful influence of his corroded feelings. By an enthusiastic excitement alone, could he hope to relieve the agony of his wounded spirit.

Under this impression, Ferran de Castro immediately applied himself to ascertain the character, number, and spirit of the king's troops. He reviewed them in the public square, and, to his great mortification, found that they hardly amounted to a couple of thousands, and that they were very scantily equipped. Towards the evening, however, Don Men Rodriguez de Sanabria, an adherent of Don Pedro, who it had been erroneously supposed had joined the cause of his rival, unexpectedly made his appearance before the town, with a gallant party of horse.

At first their arrival created some alarm, for many idle rumours and ridiculous fears had converted these friends into the van guard of Don Enrique's army. Accordingly, the inhabitants were thrown into some confusion; but their apprehensions were soon dispelled and converted into joy, when it was found that the leader of the party was Men de Sanabria, a gallant and powerful noble, and that the men he commanded were perfectly equipped, and full of spirits

Indeed, the troop was composed of volunteers, enthusiastically attached to this nobleman.

“Hail, Don Ferran de Castro! well met,” he cried, as he perceived the cavalier, “how fares our master the king?”

“Why, well; with a stubborn and unbending soul, as it behoveth the sovereign of Castile, ready to encounter danger, and support disasters, like a true soldier. Your assistance, Don Men de Sanabria, arrives most seasonably.”

Don Pedro received his new ally with much cordiality.

“I told you,” he said, smiling, to Ferran de Castro, “my presentiment of some fortunate event was not to be despised. How many bring you, Señor Don Men?”

“Some hundreds at least—all valiant and decided men, most of them my own vassals. My liege, you may marvel that I have so long delayed in joining your standard, noted as I was for my fidelity. I have learnt that rumours, highly derogatory to my honour, have been set

afloat ; but my integrity has been above them, and my time has been spent in collecting a gallant party, to aid in this sacred cause.—Señor,” he then added, with warmth, “ I have sold all my property for the furtherance of your cause, and I hasten to join your banners. It is not too late ; Toledo still gallantly holds out, and our allies, the Moors, are marching forward to our assistance.”

“ The Moors !” cried the king, smiling ; “ the wretches fled most basely in our last skirmish, and, thanks to the expedition of their feet, and the blunders of a good old *escudero*, I was nigh being surprised by the traitor Lara.”

During the remainder of the day the king appeared in unusual good spirits ; the arrival of Men de Sanabria had given much elasticity to his hopes, and he still placed great confidence in the courage and fidelity of the defenders of Toledo, spite of the various reports, constantly circulated, of the many plots daily contrived to surrender it to Don Enrique.

It was determined to hasten to the succour of the besieged, and accordingly Don Pedro impatiently awaited the dawning of the next day, to carry this resolution into effect.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VICTIM.

Oh! perilous mouths,
That bear in them one and the self-same tongue,
Either of condemnation or approof!
Bidding the law make court'sy to their will;
Hooking both right and wrong to the appetite,
To follow as it draws.

easeure for Measure.

WHEN the escape of Don Ferran de Castro became known to the inhabitants of Orcajo, an unusual ferment was excited on every side. The fanatic partizans of Trastamara had longed with impatience for the death of the redoubtable and

faithful Castilian, and to see their expectations thus baffled, when on the point of being accomplished, naturally irritated them. Early in the morning, a rabble gathered round the prison, and, with vociferous cries, began to demand the deliverance of the jailer into their power, that they might tear him into pieces. The prudent jailer, however, in no hurry to depart to a better world, had already taken his measures to disappoint them; anticipating the storm, he had most expeditiously retired from the place into voluntary banishment—no great penance, considering the rich prize he had taken special care to secure, in payment of Don Ferran's freedom.

A hot-headed, turbulent fellow, who led the motley crew, began to cry out treason—whilst a couple of priests, like birds of ill-omen, ran about the streets, to announce that there was a horrid conspiracy to betray the town into the power of Don Pedro, and murder the zealous partizans of Trastamara.

The commotion increased—the church bells

were already ringing to arms—and people ran about the streets, as if some invisible hand was ready to sever their condemned heads from their bodies. The *ruse* succeeded perfectly; the most preposterous fears were awakened, and all the passions of the disorderly populace were set in motion.

They proceeded in a body to the mansion of Don Alvar de Lara, then the supreme authority and arbiter in the place, raising a clamorous concert of mixed supplications and threats.

They demanded that all prisoners should be given up to them, and every suspected person put to immediate death. But Lara, with the daring natural to his character, coolly appeared in the balcony, as if reckless of all danger or alarm.

“Ye noisy fools,” he cried, fiercely, “disperse immediately; or, by the honour of all the Laras, my soldiers will soon chastise your unruly temper in an exemplary manner!”

Yells and groans were the only reply, from every side; but, however ungovernable the rage of the populace might appear, it was not yet arrived to such a height as to make them forgetful of their own safety; they knew that any offence or violence, exerted against the favourite of Don Enrique, would recoil on their own heads. A continual and tremendous clamour, therefore, was the only pastime in which they allowed themselves to indulge.

But mere noise is seldom very formidable, or very effectual, in furthering the views of violent men. The principal fomentors of the tumult soon perceived the inexpediency of their brawling system to accomplish their designs. Accordingly, they had recourse to more active measures.

Two men were seen to make their way through the crowd, and claimed admittance to Don Alvar; a request which, in consideration of their external appearance, was in no manner

opposed by the sentinels. These two deputies, if we may so call them, were the *Alcalde** of the place, and Agraz, a Canon of Seville, well noted for his fanatic zeal against Don Pedro. Lara received them with courtesy, and desired to be acquainted with their mission.

“ Señor Don Alvar de Lara Manriquez,” very pompously began the Alcalde, a short, sturdy, full-faced peasant—and then he stopped as if to fetch breath, in order to get through his oration with becoming spirit.

“ Well, Señor Alcalde?” inquired Lara.

The Alcalde put on a very grave, magisterial face, then he gently passed his fat hand over his unshaven chin, and happily contrived to prepare himself by two preliminary hems. He then scratched his shaggy head, as if to conjure up some luminous idea, and suddenly assumed a portentous look of wonderful stupidity.

“ *Jesus me valga!* The Lord save me!” he

* Mayor.

said, with a most expressive shake of his empty head, "these are dreadful times, Señor!"

Lara nodded assent, rather impatient at the dilatory temperament of the orator.

"Don Alvar," continued the Alcalde, "God keep us in his grace!"

To this pious wish the cavalier likewise assented, and forthwith the Alcalde resumed the caresses of his chin.

"It is indeed," he then said, "a terrible sight to see a town in a riot; because, do you see, Señor, when a town is in a riot, who knows what excesses may be committed?"

"Very true," replied Don Alvar.

"And now, Señor, you see how things stand. Heaven preserve us—these are sad times indeed! The inhabitants of this town, do you see, Señor, are grown very turbulent; indeed they are more like madmen, and I of course, by virtue of my office, am the first amongst them, and it is my duty to come here, and let you know, what you see. Moreover, I am accompanied in

this mission by this illustrious Canon, who, being a minister of peace, must certainly dislike every thing that wears the aspect of strife."

These being axioms that required no comment, there was a fair chance of never ending the interview as long as the worshipful Alcalde thought it expedient to continue in the same strain. Lara, therefore, rather out of humour, said,

"*Al grano, Señor Alcalde,** what is your purpose?"

"Well, Sir, I come to inform you of the turbulent state of the town, which, as you see, is the sad truth—and now, Señor, it strikes me, that it would be highly prudent to quiet this disturbance, for the good of the town."

"True, Señor Alcalde—it strikes me in the same light," answered Lara, "and I have accordingly determined to put an end to the sport. I shall charge you, therefore, to inform those

* To the point, Mr. Mayor.

astounding vociferators, that I have had quite enough of their folly for this day, and that, unless they please to give some respite to their lungs, and disperse, I shall resort to a very summary expedient, in order to stop their mouths."

The Alcalde did not exactly comprehend the purport of this speech, but as there was something about shutting mouths, he very innocently observed:

"But consider, Señor, we should not be able to find *mordazas** in this town for so many mouths; besides, I doubt whether, in the present state, they would submit to be gagged."

Don Alvar smiled at the *naïveté* of the matter-of-fact Alcalde—a sign of mirth, for which his worship really did not see any occasion.

"Your observations, Señor Alcalde," said Lara, "are perfectly just. I am decidedly of your opinion; and instead, therefore, of having

* Anglice—a gag.

recourse to the *mordazas*, I shall merely call in the aid of a party of my horsemen—very clever men, I can assure you, at severing heads from their trunks; and I apprehend, that by a timely operation of the kind upon two or three score of the most refractory, things will in a few moments be set to rights.”

His worship stared in perfect bewilderment. The grave Canon of Seville, who had observed a most profound silence, made a very dismal grimace. He considered, however, that it was high time for him to interpose, and not suffer the dull Alcalde any longer to act as speaker.

“In the name of Heaven!” he cried, with mournful earnestness, “what do I hear? And is it really the intention of Don Alvar de Lara to slaughter in this cruel manner, the true and loyal subjects of our good king, Don Enrique, merely because, in their abundant zeal, they chance to show their attachment rather indiscreetly?—Far better, Señor Don Alvar,” he then added, with some asperity, “not to give them

cause for this tumult, than to check the expression of their irritated feelings in so atrocious a manner."

"Señor Canonigo," replied Lara, coolly, "I make no doubt you are very competent to fulfil the duties of your station, and I would never attempt to interfere with you on the matter. I beg, therefore, you will extend a similar indulgence towards me, in the discharge of my functions."

The cool, steady manner in which these words were uttered, made the canon sensible of the necessity of changing his plan of operations. He, therefore, very appropriately dismissed the clerical frown from his countenance, and established in its place a most evangelical smile.

"Heaven forbid, Señor de Lara," he said, mildly, "that I should pretend to teach you your duty. I humbly beg forgiveness, if in my zeal I have innocently offended. Nothing was more distant from my mind. As a minister of the God of Peace, it was merely my intention

to dissuade you from the effusion of human blood—a dreadful calamity at all times, but doubly so when the blood spilt belongs to men zealous in the cause of their religion and their king. A tumult, being a kind of opposition and rebellion to the laws, is always criminal; but there are certain critical moments when they become partly excusable, and when the conductors of them, misguided by their zeal, are more to be pitied than blamed. Examples of this nature occur in the holy writings; and, indeed, an ardent enthusiasm, originating in pious and just motives, is far from being against the spirit of religion.”

The Alcalde remained mute, staring, with wondering eyes, and a mouth gaping with admiration, at the fluency of the priest, and the unction with which he delivered his sermon.

But all this time the rioters were becoming exceedingly impatient, and the tumult, instead of subsiding, was increasing every moment.

“How can we blame them?” cried the

Canon Agraz, “when they labour under the impression that the state is in danger—that a catastrophe may shortly be expected—that many traitors lurk in this town, and that a notorious criminal walks the public streets with impunity? A sacrilegious murderer is now in the prison; whilst another dangerous man, the minion of the modern Achab, the Nero of the times, has been suffered to effect his escape. Alas! we ought to forgive any excess which the alarmed people might commit, in the present excitement of their feelings.”

At this moment, in order, no doubt, that the good Agraz might have an opportunity of illustrating what he advanced, a large rotten apple briskly made its way through the open casement, and very unceremoniously alighted on the rubicund nose of the canon. Being totally unprepared, and by no means relishing this rough salutation, he was exceedingly discomposed. He unwarily swore a huge oath, and, stamping fiercely—

“ I would give a thousand maravedis,” he cried, “ to know the rascal ; he deserves to be broiled alive for the offence !”

“ Not if we consider the present excitement of his feelings,” very coolly replied Alvar de Lara ; “ besides, you ought to be thankful to his forbearance ; for had he favoured your proboscis with a hard stone, instead of a soft apple, think how fatally different would have been the result.”

This bitter banter called the irritated priest to his senses, and as he wiped away the nasty effects of the smashed missile, he gradually regained his composure, for he saw common sense required to take every thing in good part.

“ Seriously,” said Lara, “ these doings must immediately be stopped ; for, however charitably you may reason, Señor Canonigo, upon the affair, I am in no way inclined to receive a similar salutation, with your truly exemplary meekness.”

“ Don Alvar,” replied the canon, rather an-

grily, "this is indeed no time for merriment—as you value the prosperity of our cause, I charge you then to look attentively to the dangers of our position; any violent measure, instead of calming, will only tend to exasperate the passion of the people. God forbid that the least of the faithful adherents of Don Enrique should die in the very act of exerting themselves in his cause. Fortune offers us another method of restoring tranquillity—a method less severe, but far more just. Indeed, justice—absolute justice, requires that it should be immediately adopted. Perhaps, Señor, you are not aware that there lingers now in the dungeon a fearful criminal, an abandoned wretch, a sacrilegious assassin, whose death has, by some unpardonable neglect, been hitherto delayed; though he was taken nearly two days since, the expiation of his crimes is thus unnecessarily protracted. The sacrifice of this wretch will serve to calm the just indignation of the public. This act of strict justice cannot be denied—now, less than

any other time ; a terrible example must be made to deter similar criminals from their evil paths."

"What is the name of the prisoner?" demanded Lara.

"Rufino Diez—even the assassin of our brother canon, of Seville. Yes, Don Alvar, the assassin of that friend of your late honoured and noble father."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Lara, in surprise ; "how came he to be taken ? He had oftentimes sagaciously baffled every snare laid against him ?"

"Ay," gravely replied the canon, "but his fate was decreed on high ; sooner or later the vengeance of offended Heaven will reach the ruthless criminal who adds impiety to cruelty. However endued with cunning and bodily strength, he cannot escape the retribution due to his crimes. He was fortunately taken in the late skirmish near this town, where his mad attachment to the tyrant principally facilitated

his capture. In the bustle of more important affairs, I am willing to suppose his punishment was overlooked, though it must be allowed that the removal of so contaminated a wretch from the face of the earth was an object to claim immediate attention."

"It was," repeated the worshipful Alcalde, striking the ground with his *vara*,* and he looked amazingly important.

"Well," said Lara, with much unconcern, "Rufino is a notorious wretch, who has forfeited his life, and I care not how soon he meets his doom."

"The sooner the better," cried the canon Agraz, eagerly; "every moment he lives is an insult upon justice; he may, besides, effect his escape; there are traitors enough to aid him: and sorry am I to say, that there are ministers of God weak and lukewarm enough, and not at all actuated by a proper zeal in the cause. Witness *el cura*† Fonseca, who has been allowed

* Wand of office.

† Curate.

to visit the prisoner in his dungeon, under pretence of disposing his soul to penance, and administering to him the consolations of religion. A truly proper way of dealing with such monsters! it is, indeed, putting an infidel on a par with good Christians."

"How could I help it, Señor Canonigo?" observed the Alcalde, who thought the priest's words implied a reproach on himself; "the curate of this town has admittance to the prison in right of his holy office; besides, it is well known that, upon the arrival of Don Alvar, the keys of the prison ——"

He stopt short, trembling, lest by endeavouring to conciliate the canon, he might offend the powerful Lara. The cavalier, however, released him from his dilemma, by observing—

"True, Señor Alcalde, you are not to be blamed in the affair; I claim it all for myself, and shall be happy to answer any queries relating thereto."

The canon, however, evinced no inclination to

offer any queries, but contented himself with again urging the expeditious execution of the zapatero. Lara complied, and ordered a party of his soldiers to conduct the delinquent into the public square, where he was to suffer death. As soon as this resolution was made known to the populace, they set up a savage shout of joy and exultation. Such was the horror with which the supposed atrocity of the poor handicraftman's character had inspired the deluded rabble, that his destruction was considered an object of the greatest importance.

The canons of Seville, exasperated by Don Pedro's decision in the case of the zapatero, had sworn to spare no effort to accomplish the man's destruction. The deepest abhorrence was created against him; he was represented to the lower classes as a monster, actuated by a demon, and devoid of the least particle of religion. The rabble, eager to imbibe any idea which is addressed to their imaginations in superstitious colours, readily received the desired prejudice against the

obnoxious character of the shoemaker ; it was, therefore, with gestures of wild enthusiasm that the crowd now bent their steps to the dungeon, where their intended victim was confined, and it was with much difficulty that the soldiers succeeded in preserving some shadow of order in this motley procession, so as to prevent the most daring from committing depredations on the suspected houses as they passed. Arrived at the prison, the uproar increased ; some of the more desperate made a rush to force their way in, but were repulsed by the guard, who laid two or three of the most turbulent senseless on the ground.

Meantime the object of all this horror and hatred was awaiting, in dreadful suspense, his approaching doom. In a narrow, darksome cell, the miserable zapatero lay crouched, like a brute beast, on some scanty and filthy straw. He presented a horrid picture of wretchedness ; though he had been but two days in prison, the sad effects of his confinement were

clearly visible in his emaciated countenance; the spare food which he had received, the unwholesome atmosphere he breathed, his loss of sleep, and, above all, the mental agony under which he laboured, dreadfully contributed to make sad havoc with his person. His visionary horrors now more than ever haunted his imagination—the gloom congenial to his character had acquired additional darkness, and at intervals he shuddered at the anticipation of the fate that he felt intimately persuaded now awaited him. An involuntary, dismal groan, at intervals escaped him, and he talked incoherently, as if addressing himself to some fearful demon that pursued him. He was in a state of agony intense, sunk in the lowest abyss of human misery—his dark, large eyes rolling in wildness, uttering deep moans, and now and then clasping his trembling hands in prayer. Near him stood a venerable figure, endeavouring to sooth his troubled spirit with holy words of consolation—it was the curate of Orcajo; for where human sorrow reigns, a

christian priest, a minister of the God of Mercies, is always sure to be found. The good pastor, well aware that the prisoner had no mercy to expect in this world, had assiduously devoted his moments to give the poor wretch those comforts which religion alone can administer, in the fearful separation of the immortal spirit from its perishable tenement. He had partly succeeded in restoring peace to his troubled soul, and dispelling from his mind the horrible phantoms that persecuted him.

The zapatero, in tolerable composure, was now repeating the prayer which his ghostly comforter was addressing to Heaven. In this pious and soothing occupation, he was startled by the horrible clamour which was heard at the entrance of his prison—it was his death-knell—and the abominable execrations pronounced against him, fell upon his ear like the terrible sounds of his disconsolate hopelessness and misery. He was hated—pursued—despised by his fellow-men; and, in that awful

moment, he lifted his haggard eyes and trembling hands to the Father of Heaven, to whom no wretch, no criminal, ever pleaded in vain.

“ They are come !” he said, in a steady, but mournful voice.

“ Yes, my son,” answered solemnly the priest, “ the end of thy mortal career is arrived ; direct now all the thoughts of thy soul to the universal Father of mankind, and to that happier and purer state for which man was created. The blessing of God be upon thy soul !”

“ Amen !” fervently ejaculated Rufino.

The jailer now entered, and, in a gruff voice, commanded the prisoner to come forward. Rufino rose with resolute intrepidity ; but the curate observed, that he evinced great agitation.

“ What ails thee ? Summon now thy courage to meet death as becomes a man !”

“ Father !” he sadly replied, “ I do not want courage to meet death as becomes a man : no, no—I am prepared.” He then sobbed audibly, and a starting tear glistened in his dark

eye.—“ But, pardon this weakness ; my doom causes not this tribulation—my sorrow is now for those I leave behind.”

“ Heaven will not forsake them,” replied the curate—“ trust in *His* goodness : and now, my son, banish every mortal idea ; for all the feelings of thy soul must, in these last moments, be fixed upon eternity.”

His chains were now struck off, and his hands pinioned with strong cords ; this being done, he was led out of the prison between two files of soldiers, the good priest marching by his side, and, at his desire, repeating aloud the service of the dead. As soon as he appeared before the assembled multitude, his presence was hailed with an inhuman shout of joy : the din and confusion became horrible—the most frightful curses were heaped upon his devoted head, while laughs of derision and impious jokes made his situation still more appalling. There was something chilling to the soul, and awfully fiendish in this congregation of human beings,

all unanimous, conspiring, in destructive hatred, against one solitary, helpless creature of their own kind. Women, too, were as ferocious as the most hardened amongst the stronger sex, mingling the shrill sounds of their aversion with the more powerful tones of manly abhorrence. The victim beheld this appalling spectacle with a shudder he could not suppress: a deep groan escaped him—no token of sympathy was to be seen amongst that fearful mass of his indignant fellow-creatures; and he seemed to stand aloof, like a being of a different species, consecrated to the abhorrence of mankind.

The isolation was dreadful; and, alas! his present appearance was well calculated to excite a sensation of pity. His strong, athletic form, was shrunk in dimension—a deadly paleness spread over his hollow cheek—his eyes were sunk, but the fire of resolution still burnt therein. His hair had suddenly been frosted over by the magic process of agony, whilst the long, shaggy beard, still retaining its natural hue, made a powerful con-

trast with it. Rufino cast a glance of mixed sorrow and indignation round, and, with fearless step, moved forwards to meet his doom. He seemed to be collected in prayer; but now and then his eyes wandered wildly, as if in expectation of some frightful event. Tokens of a deadlier resolution, amongst the rabble, soon became visible, and justified his gloomy suspicions: some wretches, frantic with rage and misguided zeal, began to press closer round the guards that conducted the prisoner, with the apparent design of snatching him from their power; alarming cries, likewise, soon burst around, summoning the soldiers to deliver up their charge to the popular fury—the horror and confusion redoubled: with powerful efforts the soldiers strove to keep the people in subjection; but, with dismay, the more humane beheld that their endeavours would in the end prove ineffectual. No barrier can check the fury of a populace when once roused to a pitch of frenzy; threats are vain, and the sight of blood tends

only to heighten their unnatural craving, and make them fearless in the pursuit of their savage purpose.

The scuffle at length began. An overwhelming rush was made by a numerous body of mixed men and women; the soldiers had recourse to their arms—the riot became frightful; men and women were overthrown; some dead, many wounded—whilst the horrid screams of the dying, with the vociferous execrations of the survivors, augmented that picture of horror. The procession moved on with difficulty; every moment the efforts of the guards in stemming the violent reflux of the rioters, became weaker. Rufino gazed, fixedly, sternly, on his pursuers; he seemed to collect his whole energies for some grand, terrific struggle. His eyes shone luridly, and his rigid features evinced a firm resolution of not submitting calmly to his appalling doom. There was a sort of sombre tranquillity in that fixed mood, with which he expected his inevitable fate. By this time most of the crowd had

provided themselves with weapons—some carried swords, some were only armed with strong sticks, and many had equipped themselves with articles of household furniture, as instruments of strife. Stones and other missiles began to be hurled at Rufino; many of the soldiers were wounded: the crowd pressed closer and closer; like fearful waves of a stormy ocean, they collected and moved in undulating form, and came to crash against the inadequate barrier offered to their violence.

The force of the frenzied multitude prevailed. Rufino, at that appalling moment, with a tremendous effort, burst the cord that secured his hands, and, prompt as lightning, wrenched from the nearest soldier a pike: this weapon he wielded with fearful intrepidity; he pressed forward—excited, maddened, in powerful despair.

In the confusion which ensued, the rage of the multitude was partially divided with the soldiery. Rufino, like a raging bull, chased by a crowd of tormentors, sprung forward, dealing

blows on every side ;—many fell, but the rancour of the populace was in no way abated by the prostration of their companions : they pressed on fearlessly. A door seemed now opened on purpose for him—he rushed in—mounted the staircase—and sought to conceal himself in a chimney ; his pursuers were close at hand. A wretched woman strove in vain, with piercing cries, to implore their mercy. It was Rufino's wife ; with bitter reproaches were her heart-rending appeals received—the house was searched—an old man, the master of it, a relation of the fugitive, was buffeted and tied ; whilst the miserable wife of Rufino, and a boy, whose wild eyes, in very agony, rolled around, while his mouth could utter no complaint, were by force carried out of the house, by some of the less ferocious of the multitude. A flaming torch was now applied to the lowly and wooden habitation ; it was soon surrounded by towering flames. The rabble below, with their eyes fixed on the burning mass, watched, in ferocious suspense, the

moment in which their devoted victim would make his appearance. Some of the most superstitious cried aloud, that Rufino, being actuated by a demon, could not be killed by mortal power.

However, after some time of fearful excitement, the whole house was enveloped in the conflagration. A frightful cry was heard—it was the voice of the agonized Rufino. A wild shout of joy answered this heart-rending token of human misery. Presently a figure was seen wading through the smoke and flames with the resoluteness of despair. It stood for a second on a window, and then plunged amongst the multitude below ! The flames had already communicated to his dress ; his hair and beard were singed. As he darted, the crowd for a moment made way. Rufino essayed to escape, but his pursuers, like blood hounds, closed upon him. His efforts became weaker—a stone struck him on the face—the blood spouted from his mouth and nostrils. Soon after, two strong men

closed with him ; one of them gave him a blow with a cutlass, which he parried with his arm, receiving a frightful wound, which rendered that limb useless : a stunning blow with a mace, next brought the victim to the ground.

“ Oh, my God ! my God ! have mercy on me !” he cried, faintly.

“ Vile blasphemer !” fiercely answered one of the rabble, “ how darest thou call for mercy, infidel as thou art !”—as he said this, he inflicted another wound on the prostrate wretch. His agonies were prolonged ; he could no longer make any resistance : but his eye, though veiled with the film of death, still shewed the unconquerable resolution of his soul. His mangled and bleeding form was now tied to a horse, and, amidst discordant yells, which drowned the groans of agony, he was dragged furiously out of the town. Suffering nature was fast approaching its mortal goal ; the infuriate mob, not sufficiently glutted with the horrors they had inflicted, in their wild frenzy, dashed upon the

almost lifeless victim, and literally tore his mutilated body in pieces. His bleeding remains, it was then decreed, should be left there, devoid of Christian burial, for the birds of the air to dissect, and the beasts of prey to devour ; they were exposed on a little plain, somewhat elevated, which stood at the entrance of Orjaco. On the same spot the Canon delivered a lecture, in which he reprehended the populace, for having taken the distribution of justice into their own hands ; but the leniency of the rebuke shewed he was in no manner displeased with the result of their barbarity. He did not lose the opportunity of inculcating the highest moral lesson, that the guilty are sure to be overtaken by the justice of Heaven. Depicting in glowing colours the enormity of the zapatero's crimes, he concluded by advising a blind deference to every thing that Don Enrique, and the clergy that adhered to his lawful cause, might please to enjoin. By this means, the multitude, after their horrible exploit, were sent to their homes very much

edified, and congratulating themselves on the part they had taken, in ridding the world of a most abominable monster.

With the death of the victim, the tumult was completely quelled at Orcajo. A dismal stillness seemed to have succeeded the horrible uproar which had signalized that day ; towards evening, no signs of the riot remained but the smoking ruins of the house in which Rufino had taken refuge. The groups gradually dispersed, and every one resumed his avocations, as if nothing of consequence had happened. Night came on ; and the few persons whom a strange curiosity had induced to linger on the ensanguined spot where the remains of Rufino lay, driven away by superstitious fears, hastened from the place.

A desolate repose now reigned round that horrid spot. The moon rose, and shed her pale light on the tranquil scene. No living thing was near, save a few ravens, which had already been attracted by the prey, and made the place ring with their gloomy croakings, as they hovered

above the spot. As the night advanced, however, the ominous birds were scared away by the arrival of other visitors. A light was seen gradually approaching the dismal scene, and a sad group soon stood there, to grieve over the unburied dead ! Yes, the wretched spouse of the zapatero, and her fatherless child, came at that melancholy hour, to pay the last duties of nature to his corpse. But a third person had mingled with them in their sad and pious office. It was the good curate. He, with holy words, endeavoured to sooth the intense agony of the widow and the orphan. The wretched woman summoned all her courage ; but her eyes were glassy and tearless. A gloomy apathy seemed to possess her soul ; it was the result of the preternatural excitement she had undergone. The priest pronounced his fervent prayer for the dead, in which he was joined by his afflicted companion, in a sort of listless melancholy. A fire was then made, into which the broken, scattered limbs of Rufino were collected, and thrown. The

mournful ceremony met with no interruption: slowly rose the flame, and the sound of deep groans, mixed with prayers, were the only knell that proclaimed that the remains of the wretched man were converted into their native dust.

Next day the most strange and wonderful rumours were circulated through the place. Many groups gathered in busy conversation, and an undefinable feeling of awe was created around. It was asserted, that during the stillness of night, some fearful and hellish orgies had been celebrated on the place where the corpse lay stretched. Those who dwelt near the place, swore that they had heard dismal sounds and wailings during the night; and a peasant deposed that as he passed near the dreaded spot, he beheld a huge black figure, uttering some ominous words round a fire, whilst several hags were seen rehearsing terrible orgies over the dead.

The superstitious mob now really believed that the devil had, during the night, claimed the remains of the zapatero as his due. The story

underwent different interpretations, and each adopted the one most consonant to his prejudices. All, however, were unanimous, as to the mysterious abstraction of Rufino's mortal spoils, and no one ever dared afterwards to pass near the fearful spot, in the witching time of night.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COURTIER.

Men are but children of a larger growth,
Our appetites as apt to change as theirs,
And full as craving too, and full as vain.

DRYDEN.

Vete a ser torno de mon jas,
Hazte veleta o giralda,
Que si te van conociendo,
No has de poder hacer Caza.

QUEVEDO.

WHILST the foregoing horrid scene was performing, the unfortunate Costanza, now united for life to a man she could not love, sat, in the privacy of her chamber, not indulging in hopeless grief, but summoning every thought, col-

lecting every energy of her soul, honourably to support the painful duties of her new situation. Her father, despite of his tenderness for his daughter, was little affected by the miserable state to which he could not but be sensible that she had been reduced. Like many other fathers, he argued very reasonably upon the efficacy of time in removing the most profound impressions—and this lot, he doubted not, would attend his child. Besides, he was himself too much interested in the union, not to look upon the brighter side. He had now, as he imagined, firmly secured an advantageous alliance. By becoming the father of the favourite of the new king, he had laid the foundation, not only of a full pardon for past peccadillos, but of the most brilliant prospects.

The cause of Don Pedro he now considered desperate ; and since most of the grandees of the kingdom were uniting their efforts on behalf of Trastamara, with the provident and praiseworthy intention of bettering their fortunes,

and concerting schemes of aggrandizement, he certainly thought it extremely foolish and objectionable if he were to remain idle, and thus lose every claim to be enrolled in the list at the distribution of the spoil.

Certainly, to the credit of Don Egas it must be said, he never, willingly, was guilty of the solecism of not looking sharp to his worldly advancement; and it had not been his fault if the awkward twists and turnings of the times were such as to baffle the most profound speculations of his politic head. However, he thought things were not yet past remedy; he might now call to his aid a most ardent zeal, a courageous resolution, an enthusiastic devotion for the good things that Don Enrique would have in his power to bestow. Such, indeed, was the happy temperament of the cavalier's mind, that he met with little trouble in finding those qualities *in promptu*. Happy, also, was he in being blessed with that sort of accommodating memory, which is a first requisite to worthies of his stamp—that

memory which, upon ticklish dilemmas, very prudently remembers to forget. By this magical process, a man gets cleared in a trice, and is enabled to begin afresh, as if nothing had happened. By this means, also, he rids himself expeditiously of a crowd of ridiculous scruples, which most provokingly stand in the way of more timorous, or, call them, nice, punctilious men—who thus mar their fortunes by a want of proper resolution.

Don Egas had now religiously vowed not to be deficient in this courage. He began, first of all, by valiantly dismissing from his mind every thought relating to Don Ferran de Castro, with all the accompanying promises and professions. He next, very vigorously, set about expelling every speech, compliment, vow, protestation, and oath he had ever made to Don Pedro, when he was on the throne. After this came another operation, which, I believe, is not particularly difficult to most men, and which consists in indignantly frowning upon those favours they have

received from obnoxious personages, who were once in power. I am aware that such a process has been erroneously denominated ingratitude ; but this is owing to the strange perversity of human nature ! for certainly such proceeding rather bespeaks a noble, bold, and independent mind, which scorns to be bribed by paltry reminiscences into a compromise with its duty. Thus, indeed, we cannot sufficiently admire the supreme contempt with which favours and services of all kinds are treated by the upright, conscientious, and philosophical men, of whom I am speaking.

Indeed to their honour be it said, that their scorn and abhorrence of such past offences is such, that they show their integrity by conceiving a dislike, something like hatred, for the wicked dispensers of the said favours ;—and, a nice proportion, too, is observed with regard to the retribution for the offence—for, the greater the benefit, the more inveterate the dislike : and from this, two highly moral lessons may be

derived. First, it teaches kings and other great personages, of every denomination, to beware how they insult the integrity and independence of their fellow-men, by thrusting benefits upon them, and thus foolishly creating to themselves a swarm of implacable enemies : and, secondly, it points out to beginners in the science of the world, the manner in which they may cancel the share they had in the offence, by pocketing the affront when the said insult or benefit was thrust upon him. But Don Egas de Vargas, though an old stager, was far from being a complete adept in the science, at least as far as concerns the hating part of the business.

He was unfortunately saddled with a portion of what he termed honourable feelings, remnants of his pride, and the prejudice of birth—thus he could not stir up his heart to a thorough aversion for Don Pedro, much less for Don Ferran de Castro, whose noble character he could not help admiring, however discordant with his own views. But Don Egas very im-

partially resolved to make up for his want of hatred to his former friends, by a superabundant love to his new ones : thus the balance was set right, and thus Don Egas, having effected the necessary expulsion, of which we have spoken, found himself in admirable order to second the cause of Don Enrique with the whole powers of his soul. A few moments sufficed to place him on the most amicable footing with his son-in-law. Other inconveniences were got over by a similar process to that we have mentioned—for the case holds good, whether it is to ill-treat a man who has done you services, or to conciliate him whom you may formerly have ill-treated. Don Egas, indeed, was alive to no other consideration but the glittering dream of his aggrandizement, which played before his imagination even in despite of himself.

In this pleasing expectation, he had quitted the town of Orcajo, and withdrawn with his daughter to his ancestral mansion, where they were soon to be joined by Lara, in his way

towards Toledo. Costanza, after that fatal moment, when her faith became irrevocably pledged to that cavalier, and after she had performed the last sad office of love in behalf of the unfortunate object of all her affections, had been the first to retire from the spot where so painful a sacrifice had been accomplished. With dignified composure she returned to the scene of so much excitement and danger. Her beautiful features were clouded, and yet graceful and attractive in grief. She evinced no sign of her secret sufferings for a misfortune which was irretrievably hopeless. With strong volition, she strove rather to combat the bent of her feelings than to cherish them. She knew—she felt—that her every chance in this world was lost for ever: she would not attempt to delude herself by airy visions. Her loss was severe—her situation heart-rending: in a few short hours she had been hurled from the summit of rapturous hope, into the darkest abyss of unexpected misery. The shock had been more overwhelm-

ing from this circumstance—not only had she renounced the fond idol of her heart, but, as an aggravating pang, she felt convinced of the impossibility of ever loving the man she had married. The circumstances attendant on her unfortunate wedding were of such a nature as to preclude hopes which, in another case, might, perhaps, have been indulged. Her union with Don Alvar de Lara was one of terror—a dismal sacrifice, by which the earthly happiness of two persons had been destroyed. Her husband would come to claim her, and his presence would but remind her of tyranny, violence, and misery: yet this dreaded object she had resolved to treat with all the regard, kindness, and respect which her sense of duty seemed to command; for, alas! she was too refined in her sentiments—too noble in her nature—not to know that the duties inculcated by her present state were not fulfilled by a mere passive virtue, an apathetic acquiescence with the will of her lord. She felt it was her sacred obligation to study sedu-

lously his happiness, to promote his comforts, and that she ought to supply with the resources of her mind, her want of attachment to him.

Don Egas was pleased to see the turn which his daughter's conduct had taken ; he did not see her plunged, as he had feared, into that boisterous agony which he indiscriminately attributed to all the gentler sex labouring under the pressure of some overwhelming calamity. He admired her noble resolution, but he was not competent to do justice to her sentiments ; for, ignorant of the fervency, the tenderness of her attachment to Don Ferran, he could not well appreciate the extent of the sacrifice, nor the powerful effects of a strong sense of principle upon an elevated mind.

This firmness and adherence to noble principle had inspired that mutual admiration existing between her and Don Ferran ; but Don Egas could hardly be blamed for not appreciating fully a refinement which inferred a sort of satire

against himself; he had, therefore, very properly resolved to be invincibly sceptical in regard to their constancy. Indeed, such a state of mind argued, according to him, much arrogance or ignorance; it was, at all events, excessively monotonous: and when such rigidity of principles did really not merely ostensibly exist in man, he felt much inclined to attribute it to any cause but the true one.

Whilst Don Egas and Costanza returned to their castle, Lara remained plunged in a deep reverie. He had obtained the wishes of his heart—both his pride and resentment against De Castro had been amply gratified. In the first effervescence of his tumultuous feelings, he had not allowed his reason once to reflect on the headlong course to which they impelled him; but now that his desires were fulfilled—now that he had obtained the triumph over his rival—now that he found himself the acknowledged lord of his adored Costanza, a solemn pause—a dreadful quietude succeeded to the storm of

his feelings. As power of reflection gradually gained sway over the workings of passion, Lara began to feel a kind of remorse for the violent steps he had taken to attain the consummation of his wishes. The more noble sentiments of his nature began to prevail ; the mist fell from his eyes, and he was goaded by a sense of the ungenerous and cruel conduct he had observed towards an unfortunate, but noble rival. Neither the charms of his bride, nor the intoxicating hopes of towering ambition, nor the glittering prospect unfolding rapidly before his enchanted mind, nothing that wealth, or rank, or power, combined with a strong flow of spirits, could afford, were sufficient to banish a feeling of regret and degradation from his mind ; his own injustice, or the consciousness of having acted tyrannically, and altogether in a manner unworthy of his rank and the sentiments he professed, were gall to his proud spirit.

He tried to reason with his conscience—the argument invariably turned against him. He

called, in support of his conduct, his former intimacy with Costanza—their expected union—the supposed wrongs he had sustained from Don Ferran—their relative position as inveterate foes—but all his efforts were fruitless; he could not deceive himself, and in whatever shape he presented his actions to his imagination, they always came arrayed in the garb of ungenerous rivalry, and cowardly revenge. He now perceived, in darker colours, the hatred with which his conduct must have inspired Costanza, and the toilsome obstacles he should have to conquer before he could efface from her heart the baleful influence of first impression. This image was too sickening, too degrading to be endured, and he accordingly struggled resolutely to discard it from his mind. He found some relief to this pressing load of gloomy prospects, in the conviction of Costanza's superior mind and virtues—he seized with avidity this consolation, which was, alas! but a feeble substitute for the affections she could no longer bestow.

But the haughtiness of Lara's character could not brook, for any length of time, the silent rebukes of conscience. He turned mortified and indignant from the reproaching monitor, and as the most efficacious means of diverting his mind, he now turned his thoughts to the object which stood paramount in his speculations. He was soon deeply occupied with the affairs of Don Enrique, and the completion of his own ambitious schemes. A world of glorious prospects expanded to his view—he smiled in joyous anticipation of the golden harvest which the downfall of Don Pedro, and the consequent elevation of his rival to the throne of Castile, would secure to the faithful followers of the latter. In virtue of his unremitting services, and the marked predilection with which he was treated by Don Enrique, he very naturally concluded that his share of the spoils would be proportionate, and fully answer his expectations. The excitement of his present feelings, momentarily banished from his mind the unpleasant tendency of his

former meditations. Of an ardent and towering mind, the object, which for the moment commanded his attention, was sure to absorb all his senses, to the exclusion of every other theme.

He was awakened from this pleasing reverie, by the first symptoms of tumult amongst the collecting mob. He naturally surmised that the disturbance originated in the evasion of Ferran de Castro from the prison—the mystery was soon explained, with all the results which have already been recited. In the fate of the wretched Rufino, Lara could in no degree sympathize; that individual was an object of abhorrence and disgust: and Don Alvar shared with the generality in these odious feelings. The frightful fate of the zapatero was accordingly passed over, and no further notice was taken—no measures pursued to bring the first promoters of the tumult to proper retribution.

Don Alvar de Lara had now succeeded in the prosecution of his plans, beyond his most sanguine expectations: all the surrounding country, with the exception of Almagro, had de-

clared for Don Enrique. From every quarter fresh parties arrived to augment the forces of the usurper, and Lara reasonably expected that one decisive blow would bring the struggle to a termination.

To secure this advantage was now the absorbing thought of Trastamara; but the protracted resistance of Toledo seemed to offer the strongest impediment to the success of his plans. The possession of this city was his primary object, and he issued orders to the various chiefs to hasten to concentrate their whole forces, and bring them to the siege. To the movements of Don Pedro he paid no regard; the reduced state of that king's forces, and the last blow he had suffered, justified him in treating his military operations with careless indifference, for Don Enrique was well aware that his rival could receive no aid from the fidelity of the various towns, and that he would be completely occupied with pursuing a defensive part. His whole thoughts were bent upon Toledo, for he justly reflected,

that should Don Pedro succeed in gaining admittance into that city, the contest would be naturally prolonged, and the chances of success consequently diminished. His system of warfare rested more upon a plan of active operations, than on a scientific series of military movements. He had addressed himself for success to the rancorous feelings which the Castilians had imbibed against their king, on account of his cruelties, and it was therefore expedient not to allow their feelings to cool.

Until now, the contest appeared, to the people, in the most seductive point of view. Don Enrique appeared as a liberator, not an usurper—he came to redress the evils of the state, not to augment the grievances of the inhabitants. Bertrand Duguesclin and his adventurers, were considered as so many generous men, solely actuated by their sympathy for the sufferings of an oppressed nation; and as for the leagued grandees and the clergy, they of course were esteemed the guardians of their country. This

was certainly a most enchanting view of the question, and it was highly important to keep up the delusion ; but illusions were subject to fade away, and submit to the uncontrollable voice of truth—and such might be the case in the present instance. The good and suffering people, made the ostensible pretext of the contest, might at last see things in their proper light, and that they were the only class that would be in no ways benefitted by a change. The true motives of the ambitious noblemen and clergy would be scanned, and the allied Frenchmen would become as many greedy adventurers, who came to reap a booty on the land.

Besides, another important idea dwelt constantly on the mind of Don Enrique : he still dreaded the interference of the English in behalf of his rival. Though Don Pedro's ingratitude had disgusted them, and the precarious state of health of the Black Prince gave him an almost sure earnest of the neutrality which they had promised to observe, Trastamara could not

forget that the Duke of Lancaster was the son-in-law of Don Pedro, and that by his interposition his countrymen might be prevailed on to forget past offences, and lend their valuable co-operation a second time. Then, even if Edward should, from want of health, be prevented from leading the expedition, there were at Guienne other English knights, whose presence in Castile would be as fatal to the hopes of the usurper as it had already once before been.

This fear was unfounded, for there existed a more powerful motive to forbid the interposition of Edward and his knights in the present war. This was the solemn pledge given by the prince not to interfere. But of this guarantee, the most binding to noble minds, Don Enrique totally lost sight. He measured the sincerity of other men's professions, by the rule of his own heart; for though he might deceive others, with regard to the purity of his intentions, he could not disguise from himself that he was at the head

of an unjust cause, the object of which was usurpation. He had eagerly seized upon the turbulent circumstances of the times to accomplish the work of ambition, and he had sagaciously lent himself to the desires of factious and dissatisfied magnates, to build his own fortune on their ambition.

Still an inward voice painfully told him that he was an instrument in their hands. He knew that his influence over the ambitious rebel depended, not on his own power, but on the insatiate appetites he had solemnly pledged himself to gratify. In this arrangement of things, he had willingly acquiesced, for he very philosophically argued, that though the leaguered grandees were to have plentiful shares in the distribution of the spoils, still the richest prize was reserved for himself. It was an object worth consideration, and the conditions by no means irksome to an usurper, who could command no other resources. Alas! even supposing that Don Pedro had rendered himself by his

excesses unworthy of the crown, what plea could Trastamara put to claim it? The obnoxious king had issue, which he had solemnly recognized, and appointed his successors. Don Enrique could therefore lay no *legitimate* claim to the throne. His right depended entirely on actual force. This force he could only acquire by certain concessions, that is, by lending himself to the ambitious views of the grandees, and the wounded pride of the clergy. He did so, and by a miraculous process, his *legitimacy* to the kingdom of Castile became incontestable. He was recognized by all whose interests it was to recognize him; and, besides, to remove any latent scruple, should he be inclined to entertain any, Pope Urban V. had very generously made him a present of the crown, after having deposed Don Pedro, by virtue of the irrevocable powers of the church. The excommunication of the king had absolved the nation from the oath of allegiance. Every one, therefore, could, with a safe conscience, join the standard of Trasta-

mara. Nothing else was requisite to render his cause as just and sacred as it was necessary for his purpose.

All this time the most active machinations were secretly carried on in Toledo, to accomplish the surrender of the city; but a powerful impediment was offered to the wished for consummation, in the devotedness of the chiefs to their duty, and the incorruptible integrity which had distinguished the defenders of that city. Don Enrique had indeed many staunch adherents within its walls, but all their influence was not sufficient to encourage an open declaration of their intentions. They were then compelled to gain ground by slow degrees—an expedient excessively dangerous, as it subjected them to the danger of detection before matters were ripe for execution. Several clandestine meetings had already been held, but the vigilance of the governor made those cabals invariably fail. Despite, however, of the unremitting alacrity of

Don Fernando Alvarez, and the faithful adherents of Don Pedro, a partial disaffection in the people, and the efforts of the secret machinations of the partizans of Don Enrique, became daily more alarming.

Early one morning an unusual bustle was observed in the *Zocodover*—various groups assembled, and every symptom of an approaching crisis appeared. The city had been for some time in the most distressing state. Suspicion and alarm reigned on every side; the same street, the same houses, contained men attached to different parties; the intercourse of society became chilled, and the relations of friendship and kindred were broken off. The most painful sensations were excited—a horrid stillness, a melancholy inactivity, had for some time marked the demeanour of the inhabitants; it was the apathy of terror, not the harbinger of peace. Places of public resort were assiduously avoided, and a strict guard was kept on the most indifferent

language and actions. The hurry and alarm of the inhabitants now offered a fearful picture. Suddenly the bells of the cathedral began to ring a summons to arms, and a numerous party of malcontents hastened to open one of the gates of the city to the besiegers. The tumult increased apace—on every side the groups were thickening, and the most discordant cries were heard. The governor was not intimidated by this alarming state of the people's insubordination; instead of yielding to their repeated vociferations of surrendering, he hastily applied himself to check the effects of the popular effervescence. He put himself at the head of a determined and faithful body of soldiers, and went directly in pursuit of the rioters. He arrived in time to prevent their treasonable designs. A brisk scuffle ensued, in which several of the mutineers lost their lives, and the rest, seeing the vigorous and determined opposition shown, began gradually to

relax, and ultimately dispersed through the city.

In a few hours, tranquillity was restored, and the governor took efficient measures that the disturbance should not be renewed.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ROUT.

Que miro ! el es mi rival,
Fiero autor de pena tanta
Portrado yace a mis pies,
A merced de mi venganza.

See where he comes !

His haughty courage scarce submitting to
The weight which presses him ; but striking out.

LEE.

THE failure of the *coup-de-main* upon Toledo gave Don Enrique uncommon anxiety. He did not anticipate that the city's attachment to the king was so great, and he had formed flattering expectations as to the power of his adherents.

He now began to hesitate, whether to confide the siege to some of his principal officers, or continue to direct it in person. He felt an irresistible desire to come to a decisive battle with his hated foe; and the dilatory nature of the proceedings against Toledo was ill-brooked by the impetuosity of his present feelings. It was the advice of Don Bernal, and various other chiefs, that the siege should be continued, as the advanced army, commanded by Don Alvar de Lara, was quite sufficient to annoy Don Pedro, and protect Toledo. A few days afterwards, however, tidings being received that Don Pedro was advancing by forced marches, Trastamara could no longer resist his intense anxiety to hazard a battle. He communicated this resolution to his chiefs, and entrusting the continuance of the siege to Don Gomez Manrique, Archbishop of Toledo, he marched with the most gallant portion of his troops in order to meet his rival. Upon his arrival at Orgaz, a town five leagues from Toledo, he was joined

by Sir Bertrand Duguesclin, with seven hundred French cavaliers—a most valuable reinforcement, since they were brave and gallant, accustomed to the toils of war, and renowned for many exploits. Sir Bertrand had brought up the rear of Trastamara's followers; and, accordingly, soon after, the Maestre de Santiago, and Don Pedro Muniz, and other grandees, with a competent number of men-at-arms, likewise made their appearance at Orgaz.

Don Enrique received his friends with great cordiality. He reiterated the promises which he had already made, and in virtue of which he was to possess the crown of Castile. In a junta, held at this place, Trastamara augured favourably of the success of the undertaking, from the courage and resolution manifested by the allied forces. The Castilians arrogantly assumed for themselves the title of liberators of their country, whilst their foreign allies were not remiss in finding out honourable names to designate their co-operation in the rebellious campaign. The

inhabitants of Orgaz evinced unusual demonstrations of joy at the approaching elevation of Don Enrique to the throne. A change in any government will always find partizans ; but the interest will increase tenfold, when, in the proposed change, only fortunate results are anticipated, without any admixture of those sacrifices with which political prosperity must always be purchased. The people in general, in the ascension of Trastamara to the throne, only saw a certain gain, as they would henceforth be governed by a man of, unquestionably, a more indulgent and humane nature. The desired change, besides, appeared to come without any responsibility on their part. They never surmised that the ambitious nobles, and the co-operation of the foreigners, were certain to demand a proportionate pay to their services. As the war was ascribed wholly to patriotic motives, it was natural to suppose that the gratitude of their countrymen would be thought sufficient remuneration.

Meantime, Don Pedro having left his sons, Don Sancho and Don Diego, at Carmona, and collected all his forces, departed in the direction of Toledo. He appeared no way dejected ; on the contrary, his expressive eyes were animated with unusual hope. Far different were the sensations of Ferran de Castro. He observed a dismal silence during the march ; nor could the various efforts of the king elicit from him other words than those of respectful assent. The Castilian clearly perceived the disaffected state of the country. Wherever they passed, whether town or village, or solitary hamlet, he observed the same spirit of apathy and alarm. No sign of welcome hailed the appearance of the king. As he passed through the silent streets, the inhabitants fixed a vacant stare on the marching army, but gave no sign either of pleasure or concern. At the villages, the sturdy peasants, always on the alert for fear of being compromised, carefully concealed themselves at the approach of the king ; and the deserted streets presented a

dismal picture of the real sentiments of the inhabitants. A few ragged children might be seen, gazing in wonder, or some curious crone warily peeping through the miserable hovel.

Every thing bespoke the repose of death ; but the undaunted spirit and fiery temper of Don Pedro viewed these evident signs of indifference without evincing the least anxiety. Reckless he moved forward. Confiding in his own exertions and resources, he felt only his superiority when engaged in battle, and he treated every symptom of popular dislike with unqualified contempt.

“ By Santiago, Ferran,” he said, “ your taciturnity begins to grow tiresome. I gave you credit for more magnanimity. Since you have left your mistress, you are well nigh an altered man. Fie, Sir ; you, whom I have ever considered the model of Castilian knighthood, apparently wish to dispense with that honourable distinction.”

“ You wrong me, my liege,” answered the

Castilian ; “ my thoughts are not so selfishly engaged as you suppose. Though the loss I have sustained is of such a nature as never to be effaced from my memory, it betrays me into no unmanly weakness. My thoughts are otherwise engaged at the present moment. Perhaps my king will not mistrust my assertion, when I declare, that his safety is now the object nearest my heart.”

“ By my faith, Señor, it would be rash heresy to question your well-tried fidelity. But, methinks, you ought to subdue your solicitude, and not damp, by your ominous looks, the buoyancy of my hopes. For, after all, I cannot perceive that my cause is more desperate now than it was a few days since. What say you, Don Men de Sanabria ?”

“ Señor,” answered the cavalier, “ I would not attempt to deceive your highness, with regard to the real posture of affairs; the chances are certainly against us, but we have no absolute reason to despair.”

“No, by Santiago, no,” said the king, warily. “I, at least, shall not despair until I behold the usurper upon my throne; and that curse,” he added, smiling bitterly, “I am well resolved, shall never corrode my heart. What have I then to fear?—Death?—Why, my good Señores, his image has no terrors in my sight. I have schooled my mind to look upon it; and, really, I marvel that some of my dutiful subjects have not already accomplished my assassination, as a puissant claim upon the gratitude of this most legitimate branch of the royalty of Trastamara. A battle is now the object of all my desires—a battle! Oh! for there we may meet—shall meet—if all the powers of hell do not befriend him; and then Don Pedro of Castile will be himself again!”

The soft shadows of evening were now falling—a mysterious silence brooded over the surrounding country, which looked serene and still, and showed no indication of the sanguinary deeds which were to render it immortal. The

town of Montiel now stood in sight, involved in the increasing shadows, with its old and frowning castle, partially tinged by a lingering ray of the parting sun. As soon as Don Pedro perceived Montiel, he said, turning to his friends—

“ This is a good place of retreat, at all events ; —the town is fortified with strong walls ; besides, this castle is famous for its antiquity and strength. It is celebrated also,” he added, smiling, “ for the fearful traditions with which some fanciful gossips have invested its towers and dungeons.”

Pimiento, who was not far off, caught every word, and, putting on a most sapient and grave countenance, seemed to give a tacit rebuke to the misplaced levity of the king. No one knew better than the old escudero, even to a certainty the legends and terrific recollections of the awful castle — the mystery of its building—the sombre horror which attached to some prediction concerning the place. The castle indeed had been favoured with more of the accustomed share of gloomy adventures and

superstitious awe, than generally falls to other castles and towers, and could not, therefore, justify the smile of contempt which curled Don Pedro's lips, when speaking of so redoubtable a place.

The night having now closed in darkness, the king gave up the idea of entering Montiel, until the following day. As no immediate danger was apprehended, and the troops were exhausted with the fatigue consequent upon their forced marches, he resolved to halt for the night at a small village near the town. Meantime, Don Enrique, duly apprised of the movements of his rival, spared no expedition in order to come in contact with him. He marched all night, and, by dawn of day, he came in sight of the enemy, who were totally ignorant of his approach. A panic, therefore, struck the soldiers of Don Pedro when the troops came in view. Some began to suspect they had been betrayed, and accordingly, the most alarming rumours began to prevail. Even some of the cavaliers themselves

mistrusted the inhabitants of Montiel, whom they were disposed to accuse of treachery, and Pimiento had a fine opportunity of indulging in his mystical speculations on the ominous castle.

The consequence of these rumours and fears was fatal to Don Pedro ; for when Castro, and Men de Sanabria, and the other chiefs, went to summon their men to the field, it was found that at least one-fourth had most uncereemoniously taken leave of absence : but Don Pedro, nothing daunted by this melancholy desertion, began to issue his orders for the approaching fight. Mounted on a powerful charger, and wearing no other insignia, than a rich scarf, to which hung his ponderous sword, he rode briskly among his faithful adherents, while a smile of satisfaction played on his countenance.

“ Thanks to Heaven !” he cried, with energy, “ the moment for which I have longed with all my soul is at last arrived ; this day shall put an end to all my hopes and apprehensions. Advance, Castilians, in the name of God and Justice.”

With tolerable discipline the various bodies now moved forward to meet the coming foe; but there was no sign of enthusiasm or martial spirit discernable in the ranks. The most gallant of the Castilian knights seemed studiously to preserve silence, and the clangour of the trumpets betokened more the knell of some impending doom, than the animating sounds of approaching victory.

Slowly and silently the troops moved forward. The force consisted chiefly of cavalry, and the hollow tramp of the horses conveyed an ominous sound, that rung on the ears of the most timid and superstitious. The Castilian collected all the energies of his soul to meet the portentous event with becoming dignity. His melancholy features seemed to brighten in the gloom; but the sad smile, in some measure natural to him, did not wholly disappear. As he gazed on the foe before him, a fearful cloud darkened all his prospects, for, alas! he could not disguise from his heart the small chance Don Pedro had of

successfully coping with that formidable array. Not only were the forces of Trastamara far superior in numbers, but they came into the field with an anticipation of success. Besides, the presence of the renowned Sir Bertrand Duguesclin and his valiant cavaliers, was enough to excite a deep sensation of dismay.

With far different feelings did Don Enrique and his followers advance to battle; an eagerness for the contest shone in every eye, and the chiefs could scarcely restrain their impatience. The gallant Sir Bertrand came first in view, surrounded by his principal knights, one of whom bore the banner of the arms of Bourbon;—the death of Queen Blanche being the pretext for the arrival of the French in Castile, to second the plans of Don Enrique. This prince himself, mounted on a milk white horse, attired in a dazzling armour, and wearing a profusion of ornaments, soon came in front of the army, which he addressed in an animated voice. He dwelt strongly on the crimes of Don Pedro, and the

sacred duty to which they were called of crushing the tyrant, and preventing any further effusion of blood. His speech was received with enthusiasm ; the *Pendon de Castilia* was unfurled, and Don Pero Lopez de Ayala, its bearer, and afterwards the historian of these times, came in presence of Don Enrique, to renew his oath of keeping that sacred pledge. But the same standard was carried by the adverse party, and Don Pedro could not suppress a smile of derision as he cried to Don Diego Gonzalez, who carried it, “ By my troth, Don Diego, it appears that *I* am an usurper. Look Sir, to your *pendon*, for there is its brother. It is not a *legitimate* one ; but what behoves that, as the time goes ?”

Soon after, the engagement commenced. The shock was fierce at first, but Sir Bertrand Duguesclin, with terrific power, carried destruction wherever he passed. He seemed to make sure of victory, and continually animated his knights, calling to them, in their native tongue, to add to the valorous feats for which they were so noted ;

but they needed no stimulus. Their terrible blows flew about with fearful rapidity, and they soon began to put the Moors, who composed the right wing, together with the gallant body of cavaliers commanded by Men Rodriguez de Sanabria, into disorder. The centre of the army, led on by Don Pedro in person, sustained the attack with greater firmness and intrepidity : but their courage soon flagged, and they began to waver. In vain, the king, partly by promises, partly by threats, strove to rally the sinking spirits of his men ; gradually they gave way, and betook themselves to flight. In this despairing position, Don Pedro, frenzied with rage, searched around with eagle eye for his rival. He perceived the battle lost—lost beyond all remedy : and the only satisfaction to which he clung in this bitter moment, was the hope of closing in fearful strife with his hated foe. But, in the confusion which every where prevailed, it was not easy to accomplish his design. He spent his rage, therefore, in fruitless exclamations, whilst the few

stout Castilians who still adhered to him, gallantly, though ineffectually, endeavoured to stem the overwhelming torrent that rushed upon them.

Meantime, Ferran de Castro, who was stationed in the extreme right, and who had till now bravely maintained his ground, perceived a fresh body of horse, which had not yet entered into the contest, and which evidently intended to place themselves between the combatants and the town of Montiel, in order to prevent a retreat into that place. The Castilian immediately foresaw the fatal result of this manœuvre; should it be allowed to succeed, the ruin of the king would be unavoidable, for Ferran had now lost every hope of victory, and a safe retreat into the town was the only advantage to which he looked in the present crisis. Suddenly, with a gallant party of cavaliers, he detached himself from the main body, and entrusting the command of that position to Don Men de Sanabria, hastened to defeat the intention of the new horse-

men. With undiminished energy, he charged the enemy, who received the attack with firmness.

“On, my brave Castilians, on!” cried, loudly, Ferran; “in the name of God and our king, exert all your endeavours—it is to save the life of your sovereign—be faithful to your oaths!”

The *mêlée* was terrible, and the keen swords clove many a casque asunder, while the ponderous battle-axe fell with fearful force upon the polished shield, and the place rung with the clangor of the blows. The combatants were well matched, and the sanguinary contest was prolonged, more than could be expected from their limited numbers; but the noble Castilians, led on by Don Ferran, animated by the prospect that upon them alone now depended the only chance of saving the king, and retrieving the lost glories of their cause, redoubled their efforts, and succeeded in routing their opponents. The greater part of them were now stretched on the ground, and many others hastened to incorporate themselves with the mass. Ferran de Castro

was near carrying his point, though he had lost many a gallant cavalier in the struggle. Those that remained were far superior in numbers to the foe. Another bold push, and he found his way impeded only by three or four resolute champions. But these devoted men could ill-sustain the shower of blows that fell upon them ; after a short contest, they were all stretched on the ground, save one, whose superb armour and gallant bearing bespoke him the leader of the party ; he was on the point of falling a sacrifice to his own valour, for many a cavalier had closed upon him, when the noble nature of Ferran saw with manly compassion the fate of the brave knight, and immediately resolved to avert it.

“Stay, my good friends, stay !” he cried aloud ; “spare his life—let him depart—his devotedness deserves a guerdon.”

It was too late ; the knight had received a deadly wound, and had fallen. The Castilians immediately withdrew, leaving the place free for the cavalier to retreat ; but he appeared as if

unwilling to avail himself of their good intention. Ferran de Castro now approached him, struck with surprise at his behaviour.

“Yield thee, noble cavalier,” he exclaimed, “for thy gallant bearing bespeaks thee such. Yield thee, in the name of the king!”

“Yield!” the knight replied, energetically; “yield me! and in the name of the tyrant too!—No, never! So foul a stain shall never be recorded against Don Alvar de Lara.”

“Lara!” repeated the Castilian, in astonishment; “and art thou really Lara—the minion of Don Enrique?”

“I never denied my name,” sternly replied Lara.

Don Alvar’s casque had rolled off, and his wound appeared mortal. The film of death soon covered the glossy eye of Lara, and the flush of anger, which had lately crimsoned his countenance, now faded away, and gave place to a pallid hue.

The Castilian stood for a moment contem-

plating his prostrate rival in mute silence; but his nature seemed to undergo a sudden and powerful revulsion. Generous pity dawned upon his heart, and a cold shudder came over him as he beheld the dying Lara. His vengeance, once satiated, reflection came, and whispered mournful words in the ear of the generous and high-minded Castilian. The late injuries of Don Alvar vanished suddenly away, and the tender recollection of infancy and early youth came vividly before Ferran's mind. He now no longer looked upon Lara as his hated foe, but as his slaughtered friend. The fallen Cavalier, meantime, seemed to read the feelings of Castro. Gradually he had recovered from the first stunning blow he had received; and as he now languidly opened his eyes, and fixed them on the friend of his youth, all the kindly feelings of his nature rushed over his mind. In a sad and broken voice, he addressed Ferran de Castro—

“ Ferran! oh, my friend! I have wronged

you ; but I know your generous nature will forgive Lara—Lara, thy old companion. The hand of death has rent the veil of passion ; and my last words will be to call a blessing on the head of Ferran de Castro. Oh, my friend ! bend to me ; give me your hand, in token of reconciliation, and accept of my death as an atonement for my wrongs to you.”

The Castilian was powerfully moved by these words ; a gush of feeling overpowered his heart, and noble tears started into his melancholy eyes. He then knelt before the prostrate knight, and gently took his nerveless hand. Every cavalier was moved—but their attention was soon diverted from the mournful spectacle ; for now the shouts of victory redoubled. Long *vivas* to Don Enrique filled the air, and martial strains swelled the notes of triumph and joy. Straggling parties were seen hastily retreating towards the town of Montiel : the discomfiture of Don Pedro had been complete. The fugitives spread a rumour of his death ; it was

reported that he had fallen by the hand of his brother ; another group came up soon after, and contradicted the first report, by saying that the king received his death-blow from the redoubtable Sir Bertrand.

In this confusion and alarming crisis, the manly heart of the Castilian was distracted between his anxiety for his wounded friend, and his duty to ascertain the fate of Don Pedro.

“ Oh, Ferran ! save yourself and leave me,” said Lara, in a friendly tone—“ your enemies will soon be here ; they will not spare you.”

“ Lara, I care not for death ! what have I to hope or fear *now* ? I cannot sink lower in the abyss of misery ; still, my duty calls me hence, and yet to leave you thus fills me with horror.”

“ Ferran,” Lara said, “ nobly obey thy duty first. I shall soon find help from my party ; and I hope I shall still live long enough to repair, in some measure, my faults.”

The Castilian then, with the aid of his men,

placed his wounded friend upon a horse, and commanded two of his most faithful cavaliers to see him safely deposited in the care of his triumphant companions.

“Heaven bless you for this kindness, Ferran,” said Lara, with emotion—“we never shall meet again in this world. Farewell, my friend, farewell! Let not my memory excite other feelings in your heart than those of thy better nature.”

The Castilian could not speak—the tumult of his soul was overwhelming; he was distracted with a thousand painful sensations, whilst each shout of triumph of the adverse party came upon his ear like the ominous voice of death. He cast a last mournful look at Lara, and then commanding his cavaliers to follow, boldly advanced towards the conquerors to learn the fate of the king. The confusion had reached its height—a horseman now rapidly came by: Don Ferran challenged him to stop.

“Where is the king?” he eagerly inquired.

“Dead!” answered the fugitive; “and now,

Señor, nothing remains to be done but to look to ourselves. Don Enrique has won the kingdom of Castile."

"No, no," fiercely exclaimed Ferran de Castro; "the Castilians will rise in arms to support the rights of the lawful heir to the crown."

Shortly after, a group of cavaliers came, retreating in order. Don Ferran, with a mournful joy, recognized in them the brave Don Men de Sanabria, with the few knights who had remained of his gallant party. To meet, under circumstances of great peril and misfortune, with noble companions, is one of the most thrilling sensations of which the heart of man is susceptible: the meeting of Men Rodriguez de Sanabria and the Castilian was of this kind; they felt overjoyed to see each other alive amidst that horrid scene of desolation. Again Ferran de Castro inquired after the king.

"Alas, Señor!" answered Men de Sanabria, "general report bespeaks him dead. When he perceived the battle lost, he furiously plunged

amidst the enemy in search of Don Enrique. In vain we endeavoured to make our passage good—the number of our surrounding foes baffled all our efforts to save him. There cannot remain a doubt but he has perished.”

“Still,” said Ferran, in much agitation, “we have no certain proof of his death—he may yet live; and if such be the case, we must make an attempt to effect his rescue. Come on, my friends; this feat may be called madness, but we must leave no effort untried. What have we now to dread? If the king be really dead, and the crown of Castile at length in the grasp of the usurper, the only refuge we ought to hail, at present, is an honourable death.”

As he thus said, he spurred his horse onward—the rest of the company imitated his example; but it was not long before they perceived two cavaliers, closely pursued by a detachment of the adverse army. As the fugitives approached nearer, Don Ferran beheld with surprise, that one of them carried the standard of

Castile. This was Don Diego Gonzalez, one of the most devoted of the king's adherents; but his amazement increased when, in the worn-out person of the other, he recognised Don Pedro himself. He uttered a cry of joy.

"Castile for Don Pedro!" exclaimed Men de Sanabria, and the shout was unanimously repeated by the little party.

"My friends, my good friends," muttered the king, in a low, broken voice, "thanks to Heaven, I am still alive; the day is lost—I am conquered, but not subdued."

They now made a halt to meet the advancing troop of the enemy. It was composed of Frenchmen, and commanded by the Begue de Villaines. A sharp skirmish ensued. The Castilians, animated by the rescue of the king, fought desperately, and routed the foe; but they were at length compelled to yield to the superior numbers of the advancing enemy.

"Señor," cried Ferran to the king, who was fighting with the fury of a demon, "all that

valour could do is already done ; let us retreat to the town, and look to the chances of a future day."

They then turned towards Montiel ; but the few gallant knights that now composed the whole party of the king, in order to preserve his person, kept behind to occupy the enemy, and give him time to effect his escape.

"By St. Denis," fiercely cried the Begue de Villaines, "the tyrant escapes, and our task remains yet unaccomplished ; as long as he is suffered to live, we cannot indulge hopes of perfect tranquillity. Eh ! Sirs, my good companions, cut down those traitors—let them pay for their infatuation with their lives!"

The devoted Castilians fell one by one—others were taken ; but they prevented the king from falling into the power of his hated foes. After an hour's desperate flight, Don Pedro found himself close to Montiel ; but, with a melancholy glance, he perceived that the whole of his retinue amounted to no more than a dozen cavaliers, all

the rest having been killed, taken, or dispersed. The fugitives now slackened their pace, on perceiving they had far distanced their pursuers. The king presented a most deplorable spectacle. He had received two slight wounds, which, together with the fatigue he had sustained, had reduced him to a very feeble state. He was covered with blood and dust; his face was pale and haggard. Despite the strength of his frame, and the energy of his mind, this last severe blow seemed somewhat to have broken down his haughty and unbending spirit.

Still he preserved that stern dignity which had never deserted him on the most trying occasions. The slender party entered the town of Montiel in the greatest exhaustion; they met, however, but little sympathy from the inhabitants; the ominous silence which prevailed clearly indicated that none were much interested in the fate of the king. They appeared struck with terror—to dread the anger of Don Enrique, whose elevation to the throne, after this decisive

victory, was regarded by the most incredulous as certain. A few stragglers were seen lurking about the streets, gazing with vacant stare on the fugitives, but evincing no inclination to afford them any assistance. Don Ferran de Castro, in order to excite some kindly feeling, cried aloud,

“Castilians! behold your king! he yet lives, and, with the help of his faithful subjects, will soon regain his throne.”

“Viva Don Pedro!” answered Men de Rodriguez, and his followers; but these cries were received, by the inhabitants of Montiel, in cheerless silence. The king cast a bitter glance of scorn around, as he perceived their unfriendly welcome.

“Vile wretches,” he muttered in indignation, “not one of them but would gladly betray me into the hands of the usurper. Señores—let us proceed to the castle, and see if the lord of it be as favourably disposed as these ungrateful curs.”

“My liege,” answered Men de Sanabria, “he is an honourable Castilian, and my friend. No!—he cannot deny a shelter to the unfortunate sovereign of Castile.”

“To the castle, then!” said Don Pedro, resolutely.

The party obeyed; but there was an humble individual, who crossed himself, and evinced great alarm at this resolution. It was the escudero Pimiento, who, as we have already observed, had his head liberally stored with fearful legends and tales relating to the castle. However, respect forbade his making any remarks, and he was content to follow the cavaliers, though his melancholy looks evinced that his heart was far from approving the step.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CASTLE.

It was an ancient, venerable pile.

ANON.

The furies stood on hills,
Circling the place, and trembling to see Mars
Do more than they——

BEN JONSON.

THE famous castle of Montiel stood upon a solid rock, which rose in the midst of a plain, about six leagues from Toledo. Nature had made it a strong fortress, and art had added every thing that might be wanting to render the place inaccessible to besiegers. Access could

only be gained by a small, narrow, steep pathway, impeded at intervals by angles and turnings, constructed in such a manner, that from any part of the castle the movements of those who mounted could be easily perceived. The rest of this mountain was steep and rugged ; so much so, that it was totally impracticable to gain access to the place, except by one small path. The castle was so favourably situated, that it was an ancient tradition, that it had never been taken from the possessors. It had also the advantage of a spring of clear water, and a great many store-rooms, while, from the many loopholes, numberless shafts could be sent with deadly destruction upon the enemies below. Besides the awe with which the castle was regarded, for its antiquity and strength, a sensation of wild superstition mingled with those feelings, and accounted for the various tales and prognostications attached to it. At a short distance from it stood the Star-tower, of which the famous Merlin, the English magician, had predicted

most awful things. A knight was reported to have been murdered in one of its subterraneous cells ; and a dismal groan was heard at midnight, on the eve of some great event, and whenever any stranger came to demand admittance into the castle.

To this terrible place Don Pedro and his slender party, little dreaming then of Merlin and the murdered knight, now advanced at as quick a pace as their exhausted condition would permit ; but upon their arrival they found the garrison in hostile array. No banner waved in the tower, except the one of the lord of the castle, and the king felt sad misgivings lest this last refuge should be also denied him. He turned, with a bitter smile, to his adherents, and in a mournful, but steady tone—

“ And now, Señores,” he said, “ after this last proof of craven treachery from Don Tello Ramirez, what can we expect—where turn our way ? ”

The Castilians preserved a dismal silence.

Ferran de Castro cast a look behind, and beheld the party, commanded by the Begue de Villaines, rapidly advancing to Montiel. The bad spirit which prevailed amongst the inhabitants, also, was sufficient to awaken well founded alarm, and he trembled at the idea that the king's fate would be inevitable, if Don Tello Ramirez should really deny admittance into his fortress. In this state of perplexity, Don Men de Sanabria held out a gleam of hope to their disconsolate view.

“Noble cavaliers,” he said, “we have as yet no cause to mistrust the intentions of Don Tello Ramirez, my good friend. If we see his castle in hostile array, it is because it sorteth well with the turbulence of the times ; and as to no banner waving on his turrets, that bespeaks, at most, a degree of precaution, but no positive ill-omen for us.”

He then rode in advance, and claimed a parley with the governor. Don Tello Ramirez soon made his appearance, and desired to know the good pleasure of the party.

“By the honour of your house, Don 'Tello Ramirez,” cried Men de Sanabria, “tarry not to grant admittance to honourable, though unfortunate cavaliers; the king of Castile, routed and a fugitive, claims the rights of hospitality from you. His relentless and traitorous enemies are close in pursuit, and will you not, as in duty bound, open an asylum to your lawful sovereign?—or would you see him, from your castellated mansion, fall a victim to the fury of rebel subjects, joined to lawless adventurers?”

Don Tello Ramirez was a nobleman, who had taken no part in the civil broils of Castile. Enfeebled by age, and melancholy from misfortunes, which he had experienced in youth, he led a retired life in his ancestral mansion, holding scarcely any communication with the neighbouring nobles, and less than all, mixing in the political intrigues of the times. But he was no enemy of Don Pedro, though he had not lent his support to the defence of the unfortunate sovereign's cause. The warlike position which,

therefore, he assumed, upon the approach of the party, did not result from a desire to repel them from his castle, but merely as a measure of precaution against the lawless ambition of the nobles. In those calamitous times, the feudal lords were continually seeking pretexts to pounce upon the property and dominions of their brother nobles. The admirable position of the castle of Montiel was too valuable a treasure not to have already excited the jealousy and ambition of several grandees. Don Tello was well aware of this, and accordingly lived continually on the alert. Though he had observed a neutrality in the civil strife, he was sure, nevertheless, to be exposed to the rapacious attacks of both parties, as they both, indeed, would charge him with favouring the views of the adverse one, and thus use no ceremony in appropriating to themselves the goods of the old nobleman, should he be weak enough to let them be wrested from his hands. But now that he was assured, by the voice of his well tried friend and kinsman, Don

Men Rodriguez de Sanabria, of the character of the fugitive, and the nature of the request, he made no further opposition to grant it.

The wretched situation of Don Pedro excited his sympathy, and banished from his heart every consideration of prudence; for he well knew that by giving shelter to the king, he attracted the inveterate aversion and vengeance of his enemies. But the spontaneous flow of more manly feeling prevailed—the gates of the castle were thrown open, and the gallant, though slender party, found themselves at length protected from the pursuit of their foes.

Meantime, the shouts of triumph resounded loudly through the country, and Don Enrique, apprized that his rival had taken refuge in the castle of Montiel, hastened with the whole strength of his army to besiege it.

“By Heavens, Sir Bertrand!” he exclaimed, as the French knight approached him—“some evil sprite protects the tyrant; how else could he escape, hemmed in as he was with so many sturdy

foes; our victory has been complete, and yet our work is unfinished."

"My liege," answered Duguesclin, with a smile—"in troth you speak but coolly, after our good fortune. Castile is yours, so help me God! for not a cur will come across our steps to intercept our triumphant march to Seville."

"March to Seville, Sir Bertrand!" exclaimed Trastamara, in surprise—"I warrant me you say that in good merriment: what—and shall I march onward and leave my enemy behind, to overturn, at his pleasure, the fruit of all our labours?"

"No, in sooth, I mean not that," replied Sir Bertrand—"but has my long practice in war been so bootless, that I am not able to provide against these impediments? Think, Don Enrique, that your rival has himself now run his head into a fatal noose, from which he will not easily extricate himself, unless you, Señor, or I should will it so; and I warrant me our thoughts are but indifferently inclined that way."

“The castle of Montiel,” said Trastamara, musing, “has always been accounted a most redoubtable strong-hold.”

“Which, like all other redoubtable strong-holds,” quoth Duguesclin, “will ultimately be surrendered, if we but take the trouble to besiege it. Believe me, Don Enrique, in an evil moment has the fallen tyrant shut himself up as if in a cage. He is now deprived of every mortal aid; and surely Heaven will not suffer him to live much longer: the measure of his crimes must by this time be full.”

“As rank an infidel,” cried the Archbishop of Seville, “as any fanatic follower of the false prophet; besides, his atrocious murders against the ministers of God cry out for retribution, and this cannot now be far off.”

“But, Sir Bertrand,” resumed Don Enrique, “you must not blame me, if my confidence in the success of sieges is not over sanguine, for my unsuccessful experiment at Toledo is sufficient to justify doubts on the subject.”

“Never may Sir Bertrand Duguesclin,” said the knight, with warmth, “again experience the smiles of fortune in deeds of chivalry, if Don Pedro, the late tyrant of Castile, is not, before a month elapses, in our power. I pledge my word, and never was the word of Sir Bertrand idly pledged, or his prophecy in case of war, unworthy of deep confidence. Let this guarantee, Señor, keep alive your brilliant hopes.”

This asseveration, and the enthusiastic tone in which it was delivered, spread a flush of joy over the features of Don Enrique. The inveterate hatred he felt for his brother, and the concealed distrust with which he looked upon the professions of his ambitious adherents, made him desirous to bring the contest to an expeditious termination. He longed to have Don Pedro in his power, though he never bestowed a thought upon the measures to be pursued, when his desire should be once obtained.

The conquering army now advanced towards Montiel, filling the air with shouts of exultation.

At a short distance from the town, they were met by the inhabitants, who came in motley groups to congratulate them. This was not through any decided good will; for it appeared that the pacific townsmen cared little for the success of either party, further than their own safety or property might be compromised. It was therefore expedient, since Don Pedro had been the vanquished, and Don Enrique the conqueror, to receive the first with as much contempt as they dared, and the latter with as much cordiality as they could feign. Such, indeed, is the secret of the greater portion of welcome cries, and popular enthusiasm. The good people of Montiel very prudently adhered to the wise system, by which means they averted part of those excesses and depredations, which conquerors are not very nice in inflicting, even on their professed friends and allies. The bells rung a merry peal, which, together with a civil procession, at the head of which stood the Alcalde, a priest, and two or three substantial

burghers, made a very tolerable display of cordiality, considering the short notice which had been given for the collecting of friendly feelings. The crowd was also very prodigal of their shouts, which being rather a cheap commodity, can be had for the asking, on similar occasions.

Don Enrique lost no time in proceeding to the siege of the castle. His heart throbbed with anxiety, and he could not rest, until his rival was deprived of every means of escape. He accordingly caused tents and pavilions to be erected at the foot of the eminence, upon which the castle stood, and he immediately placed his men around, so as to watch every movement, and intercept the egress of any of the besieged. All these operations were performed with astonishing alacrity ; for, notwithstanding the fatigue and exhaustion attendant on the events of the day, neither Don Enrique, nor any of his followers thought of any refreshment, until they found themselves before the castle. Don Pedro beheld the activity of his enemies, with feelings

of rage more than surprise ; for Trastamara took the same line of conduct, which he himself would have done in his position. Promptness of decision and stubborn courage, were, alas ! the only two qualities which the fearful brothers had in common, and by which their relationship might be traced.

The shadows of evening were now fast descending, and their misty mantle enveloped the country around. The troops had taken no food from the morning previous to the battle ; and, accordingly, the labour of the day being over, each one composedly and gladly betook himself to satisfy the cravings of nature. Meantime, the field of battle, strewed by the dead and the dying, was visited by many loiterers, who in that awful hour came to commit their depredations. Amidst the deadly stillness which reigned in that unsculptured cemetery, and the gloomy silence, which was broken only by the faint, but harrowing groan of some wretch in the struggles of death, or the chilling, ominous scream

of the bird of prey, wretches were seen strolling amidst the confusion of bleeding corpses and broken armour, to rifle the dead of their last mortal spoil ; and many a horrid scene was then enacted by the hardened and remorseless men. In their greedy pursuit, they often saw a dying man, his eyes dimmed with the shadows of death, sending an imploring look, and supplying by it the office of the tongue, which was already mute ; but, with brutal indifference, they rudely shook the half dead wretch, as they despoiled him of things which, as they observed, were no longer of any use to him.

The moon shone clearly over that scene of horror. Amid the bodies of fallen warriors and slaughtered horses, the nightly pilferers with busy alacrity pursued their employment : some rifled the purses ; some possessed themselves of the habiliments of the dead ; whilst others, kept in abeyance by the fear of stronger despoilers, contented themselves with gleaning what they left. Women, too, there were, and children,

with feelings uncongenial to their sex and age, laying profane hands on corpses, from which others would turn aside with a sensation of awe. Some had provided themselves with sacks ; whilst others, no doubt anticipating a plentiful harvest, had brought beasts of burthen to carry away the spoil. Poor wretches, they felt not the sensation which death brings into more thoughtful minds. An old decrepid man was, with difficulty, stripping a young warrior of a splendid suit ; a stream of moonshine fell on the group, and discovered the bald head of the man, his silvered beard, sunken eyes, and emaciated looks ; his skinny hands trembled as he laid them upon the corpse, which seemed to claim more sympathy with life than its despoiler ; for a lingering spark yet clung to the clay, and there was nothing loathsome in it. The young branch of the tree, when prematurely cut down, retains for a time its fresh and pleasing greenness ; whilst the decaying old tree, though still half erect and alive, is withering to the eye. A busy, hollow

murmur prevailed, only diversified with the scream of birds of prey, or the sullen growl of prowling dogs, licking the clotted gore from the prostrate horse.

When the spoliation had been completed, they returned in groups, to the towns and villages from which they had issued, but not before many a scuffle and broil had taken place, and horrid words and blows been exchanged on either side. No one thought of paying the last duties to the dead. Unburied they left the corpses they had despoiled ; no thought of mortality came across their minds—no feeling of humanity dawned upon their hearts ; but they abandoned the remains of their fellow-men to the ravenous vulture and the raven to dissect ; and then, with that gloomy joy, of which alone their nature was capable, they returned, unconscious of their transitory existence, recounting their gains, or envying the luck of others ; or, perchance, speculating in their minds how they might extort from the most fortunate, their share of the

spoil. The little caravans moved along the distant plain, till gradually their noise died faintly on the passing breeze; and then the hooting owl and the carnivorous birds were left in undisturbed possession of that field of death.

Meanwhile the victorious soldiers of Trastámara were indulging in nocturnal carousals. No longer did they remember the toils and perils of the morning, and no painful anticipation came to damp the exhilaration of their spirits. Forgetful of the past, unmindful of the future, with reckless indifference they were only bent upon those enjoyments which could gratify their vulgar minds and gross appetites. Not thus was the watchful and provident Don Enrique occupied: his whole imagination was intent upon the possession of the crown of Castile; and until the paramount wish of his soul could be accomplished, he felt a stranger to every other want. In active vigilance he spent the greater part of the night, parading with some of his

chiefs the base of the castle, and surveying minutely the great pile, as well as the partial light would allow.

As he went his rounds, he perceived the excesses of his soldiers; some were wallowing in intoxication, whilst others were already buried in profound sleep. But he neither felt surprised nor angry; these poor blind tools he considered as now enjoying their reward, and as, in the game he was playing, the vulgar many had nothing to expect, he left them to the undisturbed indulgence of the only satisfaction of which their souls were capable. He knew his faithful cavaliers were at their posts, as well as the mercenary allies, who were aware that the prize they were to expect would be in proportion to the service obtained from them. Indeed, it might seem strange to behold those lawless adventurers awake and alert, whilst the mass of the soldiery wallowed in riot and excesses. But they, like well-tutored hounds, never thought of gorging themselves until the heat of the chace

was over. Their whole souls were bent on sordid gain, and the excesses to which their worthy allies delivered themselves, were extremely inimical to the furtherance of their object. Thus they, as well as their superiors, carefully fixed their attention on the castle, which contained the talisman, from the possession of which the expectations of every one were to be fulfilled.

Meantime, Don Pedro, the unfortunate object of so much speculation, worn out with the fatigue of that eventful day, threw himself on his bed, to drown his present misery in the oblivion of sleep;—perchance to behold in the lurid visions of night a repetition of the sad and dismal scenes that had marked his life—to undergo again in dreams all the horrors of the day—for the dreams of the suffering are seldom more than a repetition of their misery.

CHAPTER X.

THE PARLEY.

Make thy demand to those that own thy pow'r ;
Know I am still beyond it ; and tho' fortune
(Curse on the changeling deity of fools)
Has stript me of the train and pomp of greatness,
That outside of a king ; yet still my soul,
First high, and on itself alone dependant
As at the head of battles, does defie thee."

ROWE'S *Tamerlane*.

It was early in the morning, and already an unusual bustle was observed amongst the besiegers of the castle. With the first rays of the sun every man was at his post, and even the most licentious of the soldiery, having slept off

the effects of the night's excesses, now started at the sound of martial clarions, and readily obeyed the summons. Some important movement, it was evident, was going to take place. Don Enrique, Sir Bertrand, and other principal knights, paraded about on their prancing chargers, close to the foot of the castle, and resumed the observations of the preceding evening.

"A stout fortalice, Sir Bertrand," quoth Trastamara, "and likely to call for patient exertions before we achieve its capture."

"Ay! by St. Dennis," ejaculated the redoubted knight, "it presents, in sooth, a very goodly defence; but so help me Heaven, and my trusty weapon, we shall, ere long, see the banners of the lion of Castile and the fleur-de-lis of France, streaming on its highest point."

"By my troth, Sirs," quoth the Begue de Villaines, smiling, "shall we be so rash as to attempt the daring feat, despite of the fearful legends connected with this awful castle? Remember well the fate of the unfortunate French

knight, reported to have been murdered there in olden time. Now we, his fellow-countrymen, might not unreasonably expect the same guerdon."

"Rather say, good Sir," interrupted Duguesclin, "that we, in quality of true countrymen, come to revenge the death of the stout French knight. I am but little versed in the traditions of the country, but I have a faint recollection of having heard some such prophecy related of the sage Merlin, of Britain. Now, we ought to lend credit to the English seer, for sure he would never be prone to speak well of Frenchmen, unless so compelled by the stars; but enough—let us improve the moment, and execute the plan already adopted."

A great number of carts, and beasts of burthen, were now seen issuing from the town, in the direction of the castle; they carried stone and mortar, and various implements of masonry. Close by them came a crowd of mechanics, who were soon joined by all the soldiers who were

not on duty; a great uproar prevailed, for the idle inhabitants of Montiel, led by curiosity, came in crowds to ascertain the object of such preparations. It soon became apparent; for every workman and soldier—engineers, pickers, &c., set to work, in order to raise a huge stone wall, which was to surround the base of the castle. By this means, every communication would be cut off between the besieged and the country, and the place must shortly surrender.

The capture of the king would follow, and thus every remaining impediment be removed from Don Enrique's path. The undertaking, which now engaged general attention, was as bold and imposing, as it was strange; great labour and perseverance would be requisite before it could be brought to a termination. All hands, even those of the knights, applied to the work, whilst a very strong party continually kept their eyes fixed on the castle, to be on their guard against surprise, for Don Enrique naturally supposed, that as soon as his rival perceived their

intentions, he would essay every means of escaping from so formidable a blockade. The work was pursued with unwonted alacrity. Don Pedro, who had enjoyed only a feverish sleep, started from his couch on the first rumour of the affair. His faithful Castilians were already on the alert.

“Well, Sirs,” said the king, “here’s a huge clamouring; what new exploit is my good brother of Trastamara meditating now? But God forgive you, for a set of craven dainty knights. What! you all seem struck dumb—all your energies paralyzed. Surely the heroic and ingenious bastard brings no magicians in his train to blow this fortress away, by the mere motion of a charmed wand; nor do I suppose that he has provided himself, and his gallant followers, with wings, for by such means alone, I trow, are we likely to see his goodly person in this castle.”

Notwithstanding these observations of forced gaiety, the Castilians held a most inauspicious silence; but Don Pedro was soon made ac-

quainted with the cause of their apparent emotion. When he first beheld, indeed, the work carrying on below, he seemed powerfully struck, and a deep smothered groan escaped him ; yet, with a resolute effort, he struggled to disguise his inward feelings, assuming a tone of indifference ill according with the expression of his countenance. He affected even a tone of levity ; and his bravest adherents, no ways inclined to heighten the misery of his situation, by premature testimonies of their alarm, pretended to view the preparations in a similar light.

The king now summoned his little garrison to a platform of the castle. It amounted to about threescore men, all stout Castilians, and ready to undergo any toils and deprivations, in the king's defence. The place was stored with provisions for two months, and the strength of the position was such, that the fortress could only be gained by famine or treachery ; but treachery was not to be feared from the garrison, and the possibility of reducing it by famine, was

still less apprehended by Don Pedro, who, amidst the dreary prospects that surrounded him, still clung to the hope that some unexpected event might divert the attention of the besiegers. On the third day of the siege, a trumpet sounded a summons to the governor, and a parley was demanded.

“Señor,” said Don Tello Ramirez, “the enemies wish to hold a parley. Is it your desire, my liege, that the embassy should be admitted?”

“What say you, good cavaliers,” inquired the king, addressing his retinue; “think you it possible that any accommodation can take place between two such irreconcilable foes?”

“We lose nothing, my liege,” answered Ferran de Castro, “by hearing the purport of the mission.”

“Eh! but who will stand surety that no treason is concealed under this same mission. I full well know the rebel’s character of old—he is deeply versed in cunning and stratagem.

Yes, Señores, I fear him in a treaty, as much as I despise his power in the open field : but let that pass, and if it beseems your good pleasure to admit the messenger, I for one will offer no impediment, or, rather, I will be ruled by your better judgment."

The governor then proceeded, with a party strongly armed, to make the signal for the heralds to advance. They approached the outward gate, where the trumpeter and two squires were ordered to remain, whilst the heralds, who carried the flag of peace, were blindfolded, and in due ceremony conducted to the presence of the king. Don Pedro was surrounded by his scanty, but devoted retinue, which, to make some show of power, he had summoned about his person, and marshalled in the most imposing style.

The heralds were led into the hall of audience, and the scarf was removed from their eyes. They were Don Pero Lopez de Ayala and the

Begue de Villaines. Don Pero, in a confident and bold tone of voice, then began—

“We come in the name of Don Enrique, and his powerful ally, Sir Bertrand Duguesclin, to treat with the governor of the castle, concerning its surrender.”

“Don Pero Lope,” interrupted the governor, “you stand now before Don Pedro of Castile; and whilst he honours this fortress with his presence, there can be no other governor or commander. To him, therefore, your embassy must be addressed.”

“’Tis well,” said Don Pero, biting his lip; “since you delegate your power to another person, we may conscientiously proceed to the discharge of our mission.”

The king could scarcely restrain his rising choler at the insolence of the cavalier’s words; but a desire to know how far his proposal would be carried, induced him to overlook this studied insult to his person. With a mild tone, he therefore said—

“ I am much beholden to your condescension, Señor, and shall, to the best of my power, endeavour to treat with due consideration the proposals of the right noble chiefs who send you hither.”

“ Don Pedro,” resumed the delegate, “ it is superfluous to recur to the calamities which overwhelm this unfortunate country. The land is soaked in blood, and misfortune succeeds misfortune with fearful rapidity. It is not my intention to dwell upon the origin of so many disasters—it would be an invidious task at the present moment. Enough that our good master, Don Enrique, and his great ally, the mighty Sir Bertrand Duguesclin, have deeply meditated on these evils, and strenuously resolved to bring them to a termination.”

“ By Santiago !” here interrupted the king, very drily, “ a most generous and humane resolution, and we are greatly beholden to your good master Don Enrique, and his great ally, the mighty Sir Bertrand Duguesclin ! The

times, as you justly observe, Don Lope, have been most calamitous for Castile, and I cannot sufficiently admire your discretion in passing over the origin of so many civil dissensions. Indeed, it would be an idle task to repeat a well known fact; and, as you very justly think, we must not lose time in dwelling upon the ambition and turbulent spirit of some nettlesome grandees, and martial clergymen, the true cause of so many disasters. I shall confine myself to the agreeable part of your address, and must first testify my heartfelt approbation of your good master, Don Enrique's proceedings. I shall, moreover, be duly grateful for his sympathy, on behalf of my suffering subjects, though I must observe, by the way, that it is a sad pity the said sympathy should not have touched his heart a little sooner. However, it is not too late; for I make no doubt, that the result of those deep meditations and strenuous resolutions, will be, to disband his army of rebels, and send back his mighty

ally, with all his beggarly followers, to their own country; there to show their mettlesome propensities at their good pleasure."

Every one was struck at the strangeness of this speech, no less than the cool sarcastic manner in which it was expressed. But the astonishment of the two messengers knew no bounds. For some time neither of them could find words to reply, and a dead pause ensued. The king, with stern dignity, stood in the attitude of one expecting an answer; whilst his surrounding cavaliers observed a religious silence, in anxious suspense respecting the results of so strange a scene.

"Don Pedro," cried Don Pero Lopez, in evident vexation, "methinks the tone of sarcasm, which you have thought proper to adopt, is in no manner suitable to the occasion. But you must not affect to misconstrue the object of my mission. I come as the representative of a conqueror to propose arrangements, not to have them pointed out."

“And by my troth, Señor Don Pero de Ayala,” exclaimed the king, “the conqueror could not have chosen a more worthy representative ! I say as much also of the representative of the mighty Sir Bertrand,” he added, turning with a look of supercilious contempt to the Begue de Villaines.”

“Thanks, Señor,” answered the Begue, bitterly, “for the compliment. I can vouch it enhances the good feeling I before entertained for you.”

“Oh ! Sir Frenchman,” retorted Don Pedro, “I am bound to say that the good feeling is reciprocal. I owe you, Sir, much kindness, for I have not forgotten your wonderful alacrity in coming to close quarters. Now, Sir Begue de Villaines, it is highly distressing I should not be able to remunerate your kindly offices to the utmost extent of my wishes ; but you must blame my present inability, not my will.”

“Of that I am conscious,” coolly returned the Begue ; “gratitude was one of the many virtues

which graced Don Pedro, late sovereign of Castile."

The king sprung suddenly from his seat—his eyes flashed flame—he fiercely set his teeth—and, in uncontrollable anger, he exclaimed :—

"By the foul fiend, thou liest, Frenchman ! Don Pedro *is* the present sovereign of Castile ; and if rebellious vassals, and churlish, rapacious foreigners, have conspired to rob him of his crown, they cannot deprive him of his right ; for that the prosperous fortune of a bastard can never annul. I am the true, lawful king of Castile," he added, in fierce exultation—"yea, and such I shall remain, until you wind up the series of your crimes and treasons, by the murder of your king, for such I well conceive is the boon your bastard master reserves for me."

"If by the foul appellation you mean Don Enrique," cried Ayala, "you deeply wrong his heart, for more noble thoughts occupy his heroic mind. As a conqueror, he generously tenders his hand to his foe, in amity and good will. As

a brother he purports to have compassion upon Don Pedro; and, as such, should you be disposed to listen to him, a pacific arrangement would be the happy result. But previous to this, the castle must surrender, and you, and your knights, lay down your arms, and come before Don Enrique."

The countenance of Don Pedro here offered a fearful and striking contrast; all his passions had been called into play, by the tone of this last proposal. He trembled from head to foot; he seemed for a moment as if meditating some rash attempt. Ferran de Castro, and Men de Sanabria, who were aware of his indomitable spirit and ferocity, when once provoked, now trembled for the consequences, and stood alert to prevent any mischance. They feared lest Don Pedro, hurried away by his passion, would violate the sacred character of heralds, and commit some unjustifiable outrage. A horrid silence followed; Don Pero and the Begue stood upon their guard, and the latter even laid hand on

his weapon. But the king in some degree mastered his feelings, and, with tolerable composure, though in an indignant tone, said—

“Sirs, begone ! I will be insulted no further ; and the rebellious bastard, and his foreign accomplice, may spare themselves the trouble of attempting new efforts, until fate shall have placed me in their power. I am the king of Castile,” he exclaimed, with dignity, “and as such I shall never listen to arrangements derogatory to the dignity of my crown ! No, were I to seal with my life’s blood this stubborn adherence to my principles, I would not. If Don Enrique, and his humane ally, feel for the distresses they themselves have brought upon my kingdom ; if they sincerely deplore the bloodshed which they have caused to flow ; if they pity my subjects, whom they have seduced from their duty ; if they anxiously desire to put an end to so many disasters, let Don Enrique and his factious colleagues agree to humble themselves before the king against whom they have revolted ! Let

Sir Bertrand and his crew of adventurers immediately return to their own country. Let every town and fortress which has been usurped, be instantaneously placed at my disposal, and every band of rebels be as promptly dispersed. Let the persons of marked and incorrigible traitors, be delivered into my hands, without any clause or condition, explicit or understood ; and then shall Don Pedro of Castile be willing to enter into amicable arrangements with his rebellious noblemen, and their foreign accomplices !”

The stern dignity and resolute tone in which these words were delivered, struck the spectators with a sensation of respect and awe. The heralds could not disguise their amazement at the exorbitant demands of a man, apparently reduced to the last extremity ; yet the decided and fearless manner of the king, under his impending fate, awoke in their hearts that nobler feeling, which intrepidity and magnanimity, under human trials, never fail to inspire.

“Señor,” said Don Pero Lopez, gravely, “our mission must end here.”

“If the alternative,” resumed Don Pedro, “does not accord with the martial temperament of my foes—and yet they ardently wish to put an end to the contest—I am willing to do single combat with Don Enrique, either on horse or foot, with lance, sword, or battle-axe, at his good will and pleasure; and if the chivalrous nature of his knights will not permit them to see the sport, unoccupied, let Sir Bertrand Duguesclin (whom fame reports a gallant and a true knight) choose amongst his companions half a dozen stout men, and pitch them against six of my good Castilians, with Don Ferran de Castro at their head, who will himself engage Sir Bertrand.”

“The odds are too much in our favour,” cried the Begue de Villaines, “to submit to such an alternative; compliance with such proposals would be mere fool hardiness and insanity.”

“ So it might,” replied the king, sarcastically ; “ but I thought, as brave knights, you would rejoice to meet an opportunity of displaying your prowess.”

“ That, Señor,” replied the Begue, “ is already too well known to need any further illustration ; our laurels have long flourished.”

“ And you prudently take care not to have them tarnished. Well, Sirs, you have heard my thoughts—more parley will be useless ; so the sooner you rid my eyes of the sight of traitors, the more grateful I shall feel for the obligation.”

As he said this, he uncereemoniously turned from the heralds, and waved his hand to the governor to conduct them back. The scarf was again applied to their eyes, and with the same ceremony, they were led out of the castle. The trumpet again sounded, and the messengers were ushered into the presence of Trastamara, Sir Bertrand Duguesclin, and the rest of the assembled chiefs. They were not a little surprised

when they were made acquainted with the result of the mission.

“ By Santiago !” cried Don Enrique, “ the late tyrant of Castile must be utterly deranged, and I marvel not if the turn of his affairs should have produced such an effect ; yet I cannot but admire his wondrous resolution and indomitable spirit. He shall not be troubled with a second conciliatory mission—no, God and our holy Lady forefend we should thus insult his presence. But, my friends, it is as well to shew a little moderation on our parts ; let trumpets again sound a summons to the castle, and let it be proclaimed that, unless it be surrendered by the eighth day from this, we shall feel ourselves exonerated from shewing any mercy to the besieged, when it pleaseth Heaven and Santiago to deliver them into our power.

This being done, Don Enrique, with looks of anxiety, beheld an old man approaching him—
“ Well, good leech,” said Trastamara, “ what news of your patient—is he likely to live, or

am I doomed to lose one of my best partizans and friends ?”

“ Alas ! Señor,” replied the leech, “ my skill will no longer avail ; his malady is incurable. Unless Heaven in its goodness work a miracle in behalf of the noble Lara, ere three days be passed he lies a corpse.”

“ And, by my holy-dame,” cried Don Enrique, much moved — “ if so be that I lose my trusty Lara, his murderer shall not meet any gentle dealing when, with the help of God and the saints, he falls into the hands of the man by whom he is abhorred. My learned sage,” he added, “ spare no pains, no expense, nothing that I can command, to save his life ; the reward shall be in proportion to my well known affection for young Lara.”

“ My liege, what man can do,” said the leech, despondingly, “ I have already done, and will still do, though I am bound in duty to dispel any hopes you cherish of the cavalier’s recovery.”

“ I will visit him anon,” quoth Trastamara. “ Meanwhile, as I have already commanded, let every wish of the patient be religiously gratified.”

“ He looks more composed and resigned to his fate,” observed the doctor ; “ his handsome bride has just arrived, and her presence seems to have removed a heavy load from his suffering mind.”

“ 'Tis well,” returned Don Enrique, and waved his hand to the leech. The fate of Don Alvar de Lara had much affected his royal friend, who felt a most sincere attachment to the young and gallant knight ; besides, the devotion with which Lara had embraced and followed his party, justly entitled him to the gratitude of Don Enrique, who lamented that he should be snatched away, when on the point of reaping the reward due to so many services and sacrifices.

But the thoughts of Lara had been very differently employed, from the moment he received the fatal wound from the hand of Ferran de Castro.

The glittering dreams of ambition rapidly vanished from his fancy, and his whole soul was absorbed in the awful prospect of approaching death. Despite of the flattering words held out by the leech and his assistants, a secret monitor told Lara, that his earthly career was rapidly drawing to its close. The world, with all its sparkling bubbles, like fancy's fairy fabric, now faded from his view, and the mind of the patient, no longer regretting those objects he was compelled to quit, became awakened to nobler feelings which had laid dormant in his bosom. The forms of Costanza and the Castilian were constantly before his eyes. His love for the first, and his friendship for the latter, together with the injuries he had inflicted on both, haunted his slumbers; his re-awakened soul then resolved to make every atonement in his power, before it took its final flight. Don Alvar had, accordingly, sent a messenger to Costanza, requesting her immediate attendance, to receive the dying prayer of her husband. The person

sent was Pardillo, and no sooner had he arrived at Valpardo, than Don Egas, recognizing his old vassal, forgot old scores, and remembered only that he was now, for his sagacity and activity, a favourite servant of Don Alvar de Lara. He, accordingly, received him kindly, and inquired with much apparent anxiety after his son.

“ Alas, Señor,” quoth Pardillo, “ you must not stay to change your fur doublet for knightly armour, if you wish to see him alive ; for God alone, and the blessed saints, can tell if the noble cavalier will see many more suns rise upon him.”

“ What sayest thou, man ?” cried the alarmed Don Egas. “ I have always known thee for a most inauspicious owl. In the name of mercy, doth the croaking rascal bring any bad tidings, as he is wont ?—for, look ye, rogue, never hast thou yet brought anything of joyous import to my house, but as sure as a death, a loss, or any other calamity was doomed to afflict me, there came your ugly phiz and ominous mouth ever ready to perform the unhandsome office.”

“ Alack, Señor,” quoth the menial, with a grin, “ and like enough I shall not forget my trade in a hurry ; for, as your honour in verity denounces me, (though I be a right merry fellow,) it seemeth the pleasure of surly Fate to intrust me with no pleasing commissions, and, I warrant me, the one I bring is none of the least woful, when I say, Don Egas, my gallant young master, and now your worthy son, is very near taking his leave of this world.”

“ A curse on thy dismal tongue,” cried the old cavalier, “ never did cuckoo’s voice sound more gloomy. Don Alvar dying !—no, no, it cannot be—thou wast always a craven dog, and much disposed to magnify the sense of danger.”

“ It is not for me to contradict your good opinion ; but, in my humble mind, there is nought so marvellous, and incredible to boot, in the likelihood of a knight dying who has received a mortal wound, and that, too, from the arm of an inveterate foe, such an one as Don Ferran de Castro.”

Don Egas drew back as the circumstantial intelligence reached his ears. He seemed to recoil from the ill-omened messenger, as he would from the sting of a serpent. For some time he could not speak ; but he was soon brought to the free use of his faculties by the grin of Pardillo, who, with a most provoking perseverance, continued making fresh signs of asseveration. The extent of the misfortune seemed to puzzle even the old cavalier exceedingly, and he accordingly began to express his concern in the most unequivocal manner.

“ Here’s a misfortune !” he began, mournfully : “ surely never was a nobleman so persecuted by relentless fate. What avails prudence, or any good quality I may possess, when fortune takes a special delight in thwarting every combination of my best policy. Heaven defend us ! what am I to do now ? which way shall I turn ? When I thought every thing was arranged and settled, here am I to begin my career of anxiety anew. In the devil’s name, who is to plead my

cause now, before Don Enrique? who is to contradict the invidious representations which may be made concerning my fealty and attachment? A curse on all fighting kings! In the name of all the saints, why should they quarrel at all!"

"I cannot tell, Señor," interrupted Pardillo, with a provoking stare of impassive mischief; "not I, that is sure."

"Some evil star," resumed the grieving old man, "presided at my birth, and it must be decreed that none of my wishes shall ever be accomplished. When I flattered myself I had found an advocate, he, just to thwart me, is killed. Sure he has been in battles before, and never so much as received a hurt; but now, precisely that his life was become precious to me, he needs must lose it—to die precisely *now*—precisely when—what do I say?—I ought to have expected as much from the fiery and daring disposition of that Don Alvar."

"Ay, that is true!" drily said the mischievous menial; there is no depending upon such

fiery sparks, particularly when they take up with fighting as a pastime and occupation ; but then, Señor, I marvel that in your wisdom you forgot to cut your cloth accordingly ; and so San Pedro protect me, but you have been guilty of strange mistakes in your calculation. I must also say, it is in sooth very distressing and offensive, that the cavalier should die precisely, as you say, when he is most wanted. There is something unhandsome in that, I protest : especially when he could have departed this life some three months hence, with equal comfort to himself, and less inconvenience to you."

Now this speech, instead of lessening the irritation of the old courtier's feelings, naturally contributed to heighten his resentment. He looked frowningly on his facetious comforter, and upon observing the burlesque grin that curled his lip, and the mischievous leer of his half-closed eye, he could no longer repress his indignation. His heart was full, and it was indispensable to give some vent to his emotion

Accordingly, with more promptness and energy than could have been expected from his years, he raised his baton, and aimed a tremendous blow at the messenger, who, in spite of the half-closed eye, very alertly watched the inimical intention of the baton, and baffled it by springing aside, with surprising alacrity.

“A curse on thy dastardly soul!” cried the enraged Don Egas.

“In the name of all the saints,” exclaimed the messenger, “what mean you, Señor? I see no cause for this wrath against an innocent man; I had no hand in the death of Don Alvar, and it is very hard you should wish to break my skull. In sooth, it would be more meet and edifying that you should reserve this fine pastime for the shoulders of Don Ferran, the real offender.”

“Out upon thee, wretch!—*maldito de Dios*—out upon thee, I say, to come in light humour and indecorous banter, to communicate so great an affliction!”

By this time the earnestness of the old cavalier's voice had brought Costanza from her chamber. She was astonished to perceive her parent's emotion, but could not for some time learn the cause; he continued, in a most incoherent manner, to vent his grief in complaints and oaths, whilst Pardillo, in awe no doubt of a second attempt from the unfriendly baton, kept prudently watching every movement of the irritated old cavalier.

"In the name of Heaven, dear father," cried the agitated Costanza, "explain the cause of all this alarm; surely no fresh disaster?"

"Ay, woe is me!" replied the desponding Don Egas, "it has come with a vengeance! Nothing can save me now: I am a ruined man, a lost man. Of course the battle was decisive—then Don Pedro is closely besieged by the king; God save him? But how the good king's generosity will be able to stand out against the misrepresentations of my numerous enemies? for you know, my dear child, I have many—a pru-

dent man is always sure to be hated and avoided. It is the way of the world, child—ay, alack ! I am well versed in the ways of the world, and I have always been a prudent man ; but it is useless to make reflections now—this last misfortune upsets all my prospects. I am ruined for ever !”

“ Oh, my dear Sir, explain,” cried Costanza, “ what do you apprehend ? keep me not thus in torment.”

“ What ! have I not told you, child ?” replied the father ; “ have I not told you that I am lost—that I have sustained a blow, from which it is almost impossible I should recover ? Who shall plead my cause in these calamitous times, when no prudence can avail, and my enemies will be busy at work ?”

Costanza, in despair of obtaining information from her wailing parent, now turned to the impassive messenger, who, with much precaution, stood aloof enjoying the scene.

“ For mercy’s sake,” she cried, “ pity my

agonizing suspense ! what new disaster threatens us ? Speak, Pardillo, what means this confusion ?”

“ Why it means that Don Alvar de Lara is dying,” coolly replied the fellow.

Costanza was struck at the intelligence ;— though she could not love her husband, still the elevation of her sentiments, and the strong sense of duty which attached to her station, had acted powerfully on her feelings, and she displayed much emotion on hearing of this fresh calamity.

“ But surely,” she said, eagerly, “ he has the assistance of some learned and well-practised physician ?”

“ Ay, trust me for that,” quoth the messenger, with a smile ; “ never shall poor dying man be lacking in priests and leeches to release him from his pains withal !”

“ A leech !” exclaimed Don Egas, in vexatious disappointment ; “ and what signifies a leech, were he sole heir to all the science of Galenus ? Alack ! what are all leeches and medicines, quacks

and doctors, but a set of sad blundering dogs, always playing at cross purposes with poor nature? Is there an old, sour, peevish, rich miser, whom his heirs wish dead; an eternal patient, who is a nuisance and a dead weight to his relatives; or some old withered hag, afflicted with the ague and the palsy, or some other such patients, not worth a maravedi, then your doctors are sure to guess right, and cure them, in spite of all prayers and wishes to the contrary. But does some gallant, high-minded man, some one whose life is most valuable, as in the present case, need their assistance, the blundering fools are sure to miss their aim, and send him headforemost into another world. A plague on their quackeries, for making such preposterous mistakes!"

Costanza lost no time in complying with the request of her husband; nor was Don Egas dilatory in making hasty preparation for his departure. In a few moments, accompanied by some attendants, and their guide, they were on

the road to Montiel. It would perhaps be superfluous to add, that the thoughts of father and daughter, were very differently engaged.

“ I must,” said Costanza to herself, “ fulfil to the last, all the sacred duties of an honourable wife.”

“ Perchance,” thought the old time-server, “ we may arrive before he dies, and he may have the means of setting me right in my worldly affairs, ere he closes his eyes for ever.”

Under these various speculations, they arrived at the dwelling of the sick cavalier, and were, by his desire, speedily ushered into his presence.

The gallant, handsome Lara, was scarcely to be recognized, in the pale wasted form that appeared stretched on a sick couch. Much mental suffering had been added to the bodily pain that afflicted the young cavalier. In the delirium of fever, his excited imagination constantly brought before him his unfortunate love for Costanza, and the misery he had inflicted on her and De Castro, the dear friend of his youth.

The arrival of his newly made wife, seemed greatly to relieve the anxiety that oppressed him. In a feeble but tender tone, he called on Costanza ; she approached the side of the couch, whilst Don Egas, with folded arms, stood near, in a mood of painful suspense.

“ Costanza, my noble and beloved Costanza,” said the prostrate Lara, “ I was certain you would not neglect my request ; and oh ! I am deeply grateful for this mark of regard. Your arrival removes a heavy load from my heart ; for ere I take my final leave of this transitory world, I fain would obtain thy pardon, nay, thy blessing, and prepare for my reckoning, in peace and amity with those I have offended.”

“ Lara, my lord,” said Costanza, powerfully moved, “ speak not thus : you know that the heart of your wife cannot harbour a thought unworthy of her nature and the birth she boasts. If the blessing of your afflicted consort, can sooth the last moments of your existence, alas ! that blessing I bestow most faithfully, sincerely,

religiously. Yes! may the God of mercy accept my ardent prayer, in the same spirit in which it is offered. Rest assured, Señor, that the feelings of your wife, on this mournful occasion, are such as best become a noble Castilian lady, and a christian."

"Heaven reward thee, my dear friend," said Lara, feebly, "thou hast conferred true consolation on my troubled spirit. Now listen to my last request. When my body is consigned to that earth from which it sprung, take that little chest on yonder table: it contains my dying injunctions and wishes. Speak to my friend kindly of the repentant Lara. I know his noble mind can harbour no enmity, and will forgive me. If I might indulge the warmest wishes of my heart, I would embrace him ere I died, but that, alas! cannot be—duty forbids it. But these dread wars will ere long have an end, then Costanza and my friend will enjoy that happiness they deserve, and will bestow a tear on the memory of Lara!"

He became exhausted, and by command of the leech, both Costanza and Don Egas were ordered to quit the apartment for the present, and leave the patient to taste a short repose.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DREAM.

From the dark land of spirits *ye* do come,
Gloomy and dim the messengers of pain,
And strange forebodings of mysterious doom.

STEBBING.

E'en like a vision of the fevered brain
His image haunted me—and urged to madness.
And when exhausted nature sunk to rest,
I had a dream, a strange, bewilder'd dream,
And he was with me!

DAVID LESTER RICHARDSON.

THE siege of the castle continued, and the wall with which Trastamara had caused it to be surrounded, was nearly concluded. Yet the king preserved the same unbending spirit, the same sense of offended majesty, and was in no

manner desirous of coming to any arrangement with his enemies. As he perceived, however, that day after day passed, without any sign on the part of his subjects of marching to his assistance, his stern fortitude gave place to a mood of sombre despair, that pursued him alike by day, and in his dreams. He grew disgusted with every thing, and even the fierce ebullitions of anger and thirst of vengeance, which so strongly marked his character, seemed to become lost in the change. A heavy gloom hung upon his brow; he spoke little, and appeared studious to avoid the society of his nearest adherents. He indulged a propensity to moody abstraction, and he often paced the battlements, looking on the country round, and the movements of the enemy below, with a sort of listless indifference. The Castilian was grieved at this change, for it deprived the king of a part of that unbending resolution which was so peculiar to his temper; besides, he observed that Don Pedro laboured under some strong mental suffering, though his

haughtiness forbade him to impart the secret, even to his dearest friends.

The Castilian had retired to his chamber, immersed in deep abstraction; the night was far advanced, and a storm, which had been gradually gathering, now began in awful peals to burst over their heads. At first it came low and indistinct, and then the mighty thunder muttered afar, and a swift, faint exhalation, broke fitfully through the narrow casement, imparting a pale, transitory glimmer to the obscure apartment. At this moment the good old escudero Pimiento, came in trembling and aghast, his eyes were dilated with terror, and his legs almost refused to support his tottering frame.

“In God’s name,” cried Don Ferran, “what ails thee, Pimiento?”

“Heaven defend us!” ejaculated the old man, crossing himself—“my prognostics will, in luckless hour, be verified. Ah! it was rash imprudence—a mockery of Fate’s decree, to seek a refuge in this terrible castle; but our madness

will meet its guerdon. Ay! the King of Castile and his faithful vassals will rue the hour they entrusted themselves within the limits of these inauspicious walls."

"Tush! foolish man," cried the Castilian—"wilt thou continue to indulge in this unmanly manner the chimeras of superstitious fancy? For shame, Pimiento! Is this becoming the squire of Don Ferran de Castro? a man whom I know brave as a lion, and unbending as the oak, to be frightened out of his senses by an airy phantom which he himself creates?—out upon thee for a superstitious craven!"

"Ah! Señor," mournfully replied the escudero—"your reproaches will not banish what you may term idle fancies, but which I take to be the awful warning of Providence."

"Hold! Pimiento; connect not that hallowed name with thy foolish imaginings—but tell me, simply, what new cause hast thou for this alarm?"

"As I am a true Christian!" solemnly cried

Pimiento—"and hope in the mercies of God, I have seen *him* stalking along the battlements by the moonlight!"

"Seen whom?" inquired Ferran de Castro, in surprise.

"Sir Pierres de Luceval, the French knight that was murdered in this castle," replied the escudero, "ages ago. It augurs death!"

"Well, by my holidame," quoth the Castilian, smiling—"I do not much commend his taste; the night is boisterous and most unseemly for rambles, and if the gallant Frenchman continues his walk much longer, I trow he will spoil his suit with a mighty drenching. Hark! the large drops patter already against the casement, but, mayhap, airy knights prefer foul weather for their peregrinations; and, in sooth, if I may credit legends, this is ever their fashion."

"It is in verity," replied the escudero, with gravity; "and, however you may ridicule my words, it is no less true that I have seen the knight stalking along the battlements."

“That you have seen a knight, is possible enough, though there is no reason why the night-walker should not be Don Men de Sanabria, or any other whom the castle contains; and, in sooth, it is not presuming too much, when this fortalice contains so many live knights, and only one dead one, the chances are in favour of having seen a living ghost taking this ramble, Pimiento; but it will be idle to argue with your fears, so I would rather you'd tell me the story of this Sir Pierres, whose shade seems to allow thee no peace since we first sojourned here.”

“And well may it not,” said the escudero—
“Sir Pierres de Luceval was a brave knight, who, when the holy king St. Ferdinand, was carrying on the conquest of Seville, came, as many other knights adventurers, to fight in the cause of religion against those Moorish unbelievers. In his way to Seville, Sir Pierres, one evening, arrived at this castle, and claimed the laws of hospitality—which were granted; but

in evil hour had the Frenchman the drawbridge lowered for him : he came in, but never again was seen to go out. It so happened, that Don Silo de Lorcas, the señor of the place, recognized in this guest, the very knight by whom he had been vanquished at a tourney celebrated in Poictou the year before. Some evil spirit tempted Don Silo ; for, instigated by a thirst of mean vengeance, and utterly forgetting his knighthood, he conceived the horrid design of murdering his guest. On the second day of Sir Pierre's arrival, he was conveyed to the star tower, and there most inhumanly butchered by some of the retainers of Don Silo. His assassins escaped punishment, but the castle has been held in dread and abhorrence ever since."

"Well," interrupted Don Ferran, "but how came the murder to be discovered?"

"That, Señor," replied the escudero, somewhat puzzled, "I am not able to tell ; but the fact is so well established, that it would be folly to disbelieve it ; more especially, as a fearful

prognostic of the sage Merlin is connected with the fate of the castle, and Merlin, and other sabidores after him, have repeated, that many years after the crime had been committed, the death of Sir Pierres de Luceval would be avenged by one of the most renowned knights that his own country ever produced, and that the castle of Montiel would be memorable in future ages for a terrible catastrophe. Now, Señor Don Ferran, our Lady's grace be upon us, but I grieve to say that the accomplishment of this prophecy is at hand; think on yonder Sir Bertrand Duguesclin—think on—”

“ Hold! Pimiento,” interrupted the Castilian—“ I can see neither sense nor justice in this protracted retribution, nor that any loyal knights should suffer for a crime committed by Don Silo de Lorcas a century ago. Now, a truce, and let us to sleep, if it be that any rest can be obtained in this conflict of the elements.”

He had scarcely ceased, when the hollow and growing voice of the storm resounded awfully

through the long galleries and arched roofs of the castle; vivid flashes of lightning became more frequent, and they momentarily illumined those sombre places with a sort of spectral light. The blast howled dismally, and the ponderous casement shook violently. Pimiento uttered a fervent ejaculation, and his lips soon began to move rapidly in prayer.

“A fearful night this, Pimiento,” quoth the Castilian—“and now cheer up, for it needs must drive away even the stout Sir Pierres.”

As he spoke, a deep groan was heard in the intervals of the tempest.

“Heaven! for its mercy!” cried the escudero—“did you hear that groan? Ah! Don Ferran, my honoured lord, you will trust me now.”

“Then you really suppose it to be uttered by Sir Pierres?”

“By whom else could such a death-like groan be uttered? Our Lady and all the saints of Heaven protect us!”

Another groan, more deep, and more prolonged than the first, followed.

“ Now,” said De Castro, in amazement—
“ it is time to ascertain the cause of all this; perhaps some one of our noble cavaliers is lying in great distress: Heaven protect him !”

“ Amen !—and us too !” responded the escudero.

“ For shame, Pimiento !” said Don Ferran—
“ recal now to mind Bernardo del Carpio and the Cid, whose praises thou art continually sounding, and whose example thou wouldst do well to imitate. Would they have evinced this terror in such a case ?”

“ I know not, good Señor,” replied Pimiento, gravely—“ much has been recounted of their prowess as men, but that they were proved against disembodied enemies, no one did ever aver. I will face danger with the stoutest hearts; but it is not in my nature to carry my valour beyond the limits of mortality !”

“ Follow me !” said the Castilian, resolutely,

and grasping firmly his sword, he gave the light to the escudero. They sallied from the apartment, and just as they reached an anti-room, which communicated with the chamber of the king, they were startled by another groan.

“ Approach with the light, Pimiento,” said the cavalier, “ and tremble not; the sufferer must be near, though the darkness is so great as to prevent our seeing him.”

A broad flash of lightning now threw its momentary splendour on the dark pannels, and discovered an object at the extremity of the room.

“ There it is !” said the Castilian, advancing, “ bring the lamp nearer.”

“ Our Lady defend us !” ejaculated the old escudero—“ Speak to it, Señor, but speak in gentleness and in awe, as it behoveth to address a suffering spirit. What could bring Sir Pierres to this place, except, perchance, to unfold his purpose to my master ?”

“ It is a man,” said Don Ferran, “ crouch-

ing down in a ponderous chair, and apparently asleep."

"Alack ! sure enough it is a man, and a gallant knight, to boot, and he sleeps : ay ! it is the sleep of death !" muttered the escudero. "Is he in armour, Señor ? conjure him in the name of God to avaunt !"

The Castilian drew near, and on applying the light, to his surprise and horror, he perceived that the object of their search was the king himself. Don Ferran started back at the sight, for it presented a most mournful spectacle. Don Pedro was evidently labouring under the delusion of some horrid vision ; his eyes were half open, his teeth firmly set ; large cold drops of perspiration stood upon his swollen temples, and his hair was bristling upright with fear : with much difficulty he appeared to draw his breath, whilst his broad breast heaved heavily with its oppressive load of inward anguish.

"It is the king," said the agitated Don Ferran, after a short pause.

“The king!” echoed the escudero. “Nay, Señor, you must in sooth be mistaken; it is Sir Pierres—look closer, Don Ferran.”

“Hush! he speaks!” said the Castilian, drawing aside.

“Away! away!” muttered Don Pedro, “thou dreaded spectre—avaunt—pursue me not! fly—begone—fix not those glazed eyes upon me! Ah! that spouting blood comes thick—it WILL be avenged—depart, revengeful spirit, I am thy brother! the unnatural strife will cease anon.”

“We must awake him from this strange, appalling trance,” said the faithful cavalier, “the torture which he suffers is horrid—dreadful even to behold.”

He shook the sleeper firmly by the arm.

“Awake, Don Pedro, awake!” he cried, in a loud tone.

The king started from his recumbent posture with affright.

“What’s this?” he exclaimed, in an agonized

voice; "am I betrayed? Castilians, where are ye? I am your king! Avaunt, base bastard; by treachery alone canst thou supplant thy sovereign and liege lord!"

"My prince," said the Castilian, soothingly, "calm yourself; the terrors which you fancy are far from us—shake off the spell of this frightful vision; and see, it is your humble friend Ferran, that speaks to you."

"My friend!" cried out Don Pedro, in bitterness; "where is MY friend? I have no friends—they are traitors, all. Yet, oh! for a blessing upon thy gentle head, my Ferran, for thou hast waked me from a hideous dream."

"Oh, Sir!" exclaimed the Castilian, in emotion, "my royal master, your heart is wrung; your state of mind is fearful! listen to me. No, no—you are not deserted by all the Castilians, nor ever will be, so long as Ferran de Castro draws his painful breath."

The king now seemed gradually restored to

himself. He let his weapon fall ; he became feeble from the intensity of his inward struggles, and almost sunk into the arms of the Castilian."

"Yes, Ferran, it is you," he said ; "forgive this weakness. Oh ! the tortures of the accursed of Heaven are not more keen than what I have endured ; but I am faint—let me rest," and he seated himself, still grasping the hands of the good cavalier in his own. "Yes ! you will watch by me a little while—will you not, Ferran ?"

The escudero, with much difficulty, drew the ponderous chair nearer the king, and the noble Castilian sat down almost as much afflicted as his master.

"Thank you, Don Ferran," he said, "thou hast freed me from a scene of surpassing horror. I have seen ——"

"Sir Pierres de Luceval, no doubt," interrupted the old escudero.

"Peace, Pimiento, in the name of Heaven," said his master, "peace, I say!"

"I have seen a sight," continued the king, smiling in sadness, "to curdle my blood to jelly, cruel as I am reckoned. Ay! to drive away the sense of thought, and madden me into frenzy. Strong are my nerves, and resolute my mind; I quail not even before awful perils, nor tremble at the sight of blood; but yet, oh, Ferran! in this racking moment I felt myself a coward; a chilling shudder froze my vitals, and relaxed all the energy of my nature. In sanguinary strife, you have seen me wade, unappalled, through tracks marked with death, dealing the blows of fate with reckless rapidity; and I have beheld, with unshaken nerve, heads unnumbered fall from their trunks. I have seen my relatives bleed beneath the sword of that justice they had provoked; and others, in the gripe of that fearful revenge they had awakened in my heart. Yea, from this profusion of blood I gained the name

of Cruel, and from this, added to the courage no one ever yet disputed in me, I was judged incapable of all human emotions. Yet strange, oh, Ferran, for me to say, that the man who was never unnerved by scenes of blood and misery, should, like a feeble child, be overwhelmed with dread at the idle terrors conjured up by his own imagination. But so it is; and I, who despised those tragic realities, have been affected by a wild dream."

"A dream, my liege?" said the Castilian, "let not such airy fancies disturb the mind of Don Pedro."

"It was a dream of horror, of torture exquisite," replied the king, still casting round looks of appalled wonder; "methought this castle fell crumbling into ruins: the storm raged loud and fearfully without; the lightning flashed; the mighty foundations of the firmament seemed to give way, and a deluge of liquid fire fell around the shapeless fragments. Then strange sounds of horror and wailing, in mingling confusion,

encumbered the heavy air ; the hollow groan, the shrill scream, and deep curse, were all distinctly heard amidst the fury of the elements. Blacker and blacker waxed the sky, the air cold and chill, as if never more to be warmed by the rays of the blessed sun ; and, alone, defenceless, upon one solitary crag of the fallen castle, I stood aloft—the darkening heavens above my head, and beneath, a scene of devastation. My few followers lay lifeless amidst the cumbrous ruins, and myriads looked with exultation upon my impending fate. One tremendous crash seemed to reduce the earth to chaos—all was horror and confusion. Wherever I turned my aching sight, the crimson dye of blood was there—the verdant tree shot leaves of the lurid tint—the crags and stones were stained, and in the drops that fell profusely from the distended clouds, I saw blood. Then, up started, suddenly, with thrilling moans, and shrill cries, fearful spectres, enrobed in awful shadows ; mysteriously grand they grew, till they stood like giants, reaching

from the earth to the very summit where, appalled, I stood ; and then I saw my brothers, with ghastly eyes fixed revengefully upon me—they screamed and mocked me with horrid laughs of scorn ; and then they pointed to the scene of desolation below, and there, amidst the mingling ruins and misery, I saw a throne arise, brilliant and gaudy, but stained with gore. My scutcheon was, in contumely, thrown down ; and, surrounded by warriors, I saw the bastard seize upon my crown and royal seat. Ah, Ferran ! this was the very crisis of my agonizing dream : and now a crowd of fleshless spectres shot up from pools of sulphurous fire ; and in these I recognized the wretches who had fallen by my decree.

“ But the most implacable of this fearful troop was Don Fadrique : wherever my eyes turned, there stood the hated figure, and by it the maceros from which he had received his death blow. In the midst of so much horror, my eye was still bent upon that throne, where I saw the

bastard arrayed in state. Oh ! Ferran, this was sickening to behold ; imagination cannot conceive what I then endured. But no, that hateful sight shall never blast my eyes, for death will first deliver me from the dreaded reality."

This strange vision had indeed powerfully affected the king's mind, and for some time he was unable to recover his wonted energy and composure. The Castilian was deeply moved to behold his royal master reduced to so melancholy a state ; the more so, as he perceived that the terrible idea continued to haunt his distempered fancy. He became wholly changed ; he loved to muse alone ; and sought the most solitary spots of the castle, often pausing and gazing with looks of mingled pain and scorn, upon the progress of the enemy. His whole thoughts were absorbed in one fearful anticipation—that of seeing the usurper finally seated on his throne. The inveteracy of his hatred knew no bounds. It was a feeling that consumed his life, while the mental agony which he suffered, wrought

fearful havock on his wasted form. At times he seemed to shudder under some pang of deep remorse for the blood he had so profusely shed ; but the painful sensation was soon lost in the more immediate prospects of the evils which he dreaded. The image of Trastamara dwelt unceasingly upon his mind, and haunted his feverish slumbers.

In this distressing situation a few days elapsed, when the Castilian perceived that there was no longer any hopes of relief. The signs of boisterous joyousness on the part of the besiegers, made it evident that the cause of Don Enrique gained fresh strength, and that he considered his triumph as near at hand. To add to so melancholy a perspective, the faithful adherents of the king, now beheld the symptom of discontent that prevailed even amongst their limited garrison. Their courage began to flag, when they considered themselves totally abandoned ; besides, Don Pedro was not popular enough to induce them to undergo so many deprivations,

much less to sacrifice their lives in his defence. It was even reported that the spring of water from which the castle supplied itself, had been rendered putrid with some deleterious drug, and that they could not hold out much longer, owing to the scarcity of provisions.

In this dilemma a council was convened, and the king appeared anxious to learn the advice of his devoted followers, in this trying emergency.

“My good Castilians,” he said mournfully, “you see how we are situated; speak boldly your minds. I will abide by your decision, if so be that you do not propose aught that will subject my person to the power of the hated bastard.”

“My liege,” replied Don Men de Sanabria, “with all humility, I would propose what, under present circumstances, seems the most practicable plan. We are all convinced that the castle cannot hold out much longer; it is rendered sufficiently manifest by the dissatisfied

state of the garrison. I would therefore propose a parley, in order to enter into some arrangement with the enemy."

"By Heavens! no, never!" interrupted the king, fiercely. "What, Señor, have you nothing better to suggest, than the mean and unmanly resource already indignantly rejected, even when offered by the wily bastard and his minions? Have you no other plan, less painful and derogatory to an injured king?"

"Hear me out, Señor," respectfully answered the cavalier, "God forefend that such a thought should intrude upon my mind. Nothing was ever more distant from my thoughts than the purpose you suppose. What I would counsel is an embassy to Sir Bertrand Duguesclin, not to Don Enrique. I know the French knight, and I think he holds me in some regard. I will, with your good permission, claim an interview, and remonstrate with him on the present un-knightly fashion of seconding an usurper against a rightful king. I will in your royal name offer

such a reward, for the withdrawing his aid from Don Enrique, and assisting you in your escape, as may satisfy the utmost avarice of his adventurers. I will remain as a pledge for the fulfilment of the treaty, and will answer it with my life."

"My brave Castilian," cried Don Pedro, a sudden gleam of joy lighting up his countenance, "there is much in what you say. I like the advice, and will proceed forthwith to put it in execution. Tell the Frenchman, he may command the treasures of Castile: there shall be gold enough to cram the most greedy and needy of his followers. Ay! I will bestow on them no less than two hundred thousand *doblas*. Besides, Sir Bertrand shall be put in immediate possession of two towns, and as many castles. Go, my friend; go, and use your best judgment and discretion, in promoting this important affair!"

The proposal of Don Men was thus readily adopted by the king and his attendants. In-

deed, it was the only alternative they could pursue in their now deplorable condition. And although the Castilian would not allow himself to hope, he yet acquiesced in the measure, the more so, as he beheld Don Pedro so elated with pleasing anticipations.

Don Men de Sanabria took his departure from the castle in the dead of night, and was received by Sir Bertrand Duguesclin, with much courtesy and cordiality.

“By Saint Dennis, Don Men,” said the knight, “it is grateful to behold you in my tent. So deserving a cavalier ought to be freed from the fate that attends on yon obstinate Castilians; speak, Sir, what would you from us?”

“My communications are private, Sir Bertrand,” replied Men de Sanabria.

Duguesclin waved to his attendants, and was soon left alone with the Castilian knight. Don Men then explained the nature of his mission, and urged the point by all the arguments in his

power. Sir Bertrand started back in surprise, and a passing cloud darkened his countenance. Then he fell into a deep reverie. Men de Sanabria remained silent, awaiting the answer of the French knight; but from the expression of his features, it was evident that nothing favourable was to be expected.

“By Heaven!” cried Duguesclin, “your proposals, Don Men, are such as to merit only unqualified rejection; nor in sooth can I reconcile such double dealings with your previous character, which has always been unimpeached, according to true knighthood.”

“And is so still,” proudly interrupted Men Rodriguez de Sanabria. “I am now fulfilling my duty to my king; and since rebellion has reduced him to this melancholy resource, the fault lies not in him, but in those who compel him to follow plans which seem unworthy of a sovereign of Castile.”

“And think you, Don Men,” said the French knight, “it would be decent and honourable in

Sir Bertrand Duguesclin to betray the trust reposed in him by his ally?"

"Before I resolve that question, Sir Knight," replied Men de Sanabria, "we ought to reflect who the ally is, and what the nature of his trust. Do you, Sir Bertrand, who are so punctilious of knightly honour, think there is any in supporting an usurper against the lawful king of Castile? In what charter of chivalry have you found it according with its spirit, to second the views of a bastard against his brother? But I come not here to persuade you to betray Don Enrique; the only object of my royal master, is to obtain a safe egress from the castle, and for this service the reward is offered."

"Hold, Sir Castilian," interrupted Duguesclin, "you surely could not think to bribe me and my gallant followers? Is it with gold and promises the late king thinks to recompense those who—"

"In my turn, must I interrupt you," said the Spanish knight; "this shew of chivalrous

feeling may impose upon the vulgar, not on Men de Sanabria. What is the object of your adventurous followers in coming into Castile, but gain? and if such, why not receive the meed from the king, as well as from the usurper? Think well on this, Sir Bertrand."

The renowned French knight was plunged in thought for a few moments. Some sudden idea seemed to have darted across his mind; but from the impassive expression of his visage, Don Men could gather no glimpse of the tendency of his meditations: an austere composure sat upon those hard favoured features, and he for some time neither rejected nor approved the observations of the Castilian knight; in a calm tone of voice, he then said—

"Don Men, in a matter of so much moment, I cannot decide hastily, I must first sound the disposition of my followers, or it would be fatal to all. Give me then an hour for reflection, I will anon communicate with my friends. Meantime, in this my tent, you will await the answer,

assured that no ill will befall you, whatever the resolution of my comrades may be."

As he said, he withdrew, leaving Don Men Rodriguez de Sanabria rather perplexed in regard to the sincerity of his words. But he determined patiently to await the decision without evincing any solicitude.

Sir Bertrand Duguesclin now hastened to the presence of Trastamara. The French knight, whether offended at the fearless tone, and contemptuous expression of Don Men, or resenting that he should be thought capable of any thing which might wear the aspect of treason, now meditated a scheme which was itself a masterpiece of treachery.

"My liege, and ye my good companions," he said joyfully, "we may have Don Pedro in our power this very night!"

"What say you, Sir Bertrand!" cried Don Enrique, with a burst of joy and surprise; "speak! and am I really so near the goal of all my wishes? What stratagem, my good ally, have

you devised, to overreach the foolish king of the castle? Shall we then find access to the redoubtable and impregnable fortalice?"

"No, by my troth," replied Duguesclin, with a smile, "we shall not be at the pains of going to fetch Don Pedro, since he will of his own accord run his head into our noose. He has unfortunately been overreached in his policy this time, and he will be foiled at his own weapons."

"Ah!" exclaimed Don Enrique, somewhat alarmed, "has he been basely tampering with you, and offending the unsullied character you bear, even as the most true and loyal knight in Christendom?"

"Even so, my liege," answered Sir Bertrand, "and the messenger of such honourable proposal, is now waiting in my tent."

"Let him be instantly secured," exclaimed Trastamara, in a mood of mixed indignation and alarm.

"Hold, Don Enrique," interposed the French knight, "in the name of Heaven, do you mean

to mar our good fortune by an ill act of rashness? Is it a sign of skill to fright away the game when on the point of falling into the meshes? Be ruled by my counsel, if you trust my fidelity."

"Sir Bertrand," replied Trastamara, in a conciliating manner, "blindly will I abide the prudent decision of so experienced and so honourable a knight withal. Explain your plan, it shall be followed, with all due deference and obedience."

Sir Bertrand then entered into a minute recital of his interview with Men de Sanabria, and the manner in which he had deluded the Spanish knight, who really supposed his proposition was under consideration.

"Now, my liege," continued Duguesclin, "I must appear to favour the project of Don Pedro, that he may fall into our power."

"Yes!" cried Trastamara, eagerly, "you have divined my thoughts, Sir Bertrand. Bring, by any means, the tyrant to your tent, and let

him see the price you set upon his promised guerdon, when you and your free companions expect one from Don Enrique Trastamara."

"Let the most profound secrecy," said Duguesclin, "be observed as to this affair; and now the Begue de Villaines, and the Count de Rocheberton, must proceed with me to the Castilian knight to give a more artful colouring to our plan."

As he said, he departed with his two French knights, whilst Don Enrique remained in a turmoil of pleasure and excitement.

Duguesclin returned to his tent with a shew of precaution suitable to the part he was then performing. He drew near to the Castilian knight, and tending his hand, hailed him in a friendly manner.

"Sir Men," he said, in a calm tone, "these are my good and trusty friends—the Begue de Villaines, and the Count de Rocheberton: as brave knights as ever broke lance in tourney or in battle. They have listened to the proposal

of Don Pedro with due attention ; but its accomplishment will be attended with imminent risk : the partizans of Don Enrique are very numerous, and we ourselves cannot openly and traitorously declare against him. At the same time, we consider the actual position of Don Pedro as particularly distressing, and we are willing to aid his escape, provided this can be effected without creating an alarm in the army. Don Pedro must come in the dead of night to this tent, and here we shall afford that escort that will enable him to reach Toledo in safety : for more we cannot pledge ourselves ; and, in sooth, the service, considering the predicament of Don Pedro, must be esteemed of some magnitude. The reward, therefore, must be proportioned, and settled at your good discretion, Don Men ; for I know too well your sense of justice to look out for a better and fitter arbitrator. Now depart in peace, and in the following night let your master come here in all prudence and secrecy ; and, especially, he must be

content to bring few attendants : all these points are necessary for the successful termination of our design."

Saying this, Sir Bertrand, in a friendly manner, led the messenger out of his tent ; and the unsuspecting cavalier returned to the castle, in high spirits, at the apparent cordiality and sincerity of the French knights.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CATASTROPHE.

A monarch's crown,
Golden in show, is but a crown of thorns ;
Brings dangers, troubles, cares, and sleepless nights
To him who wears the royal diadem.

MILTON.

Let 'em call it mischief,
When it is past and prospered, 'twill be virtue.

BEN JONSON.

UPON his return to the castle, Men de Sanabria unfolded the success of his mission. Don Pedro listened with deep attention, but he appeared in no manner satisfied with the conduct of Duguesclin. Severe lessons of experience had taught him to be mistrustful; and yet, in his present situation, he saw no alternative between

relying upon the faith of the French knights, or being buried under the ruins of the castle. To his ardent and haughty spirit no misfortune appeared half so appalling as the possibility of falling into the power of Trastamara.

He was in a state of continual alarm. From the undisguised discontent of the garrison, he anticipated some sudden surprise or treachery. He cast terrible looks around him, and in the bitterness of his soul, he cried—"It is time to bring this fearful question to an issue. Since the Castilians are false to their oaths, I will no longer remain cooped up in a corner, with a handful of men, whom I must consider as much my enemies as yon assembled rebels. I will venture into the French camp, and when deserted by all," he added, with a bitter smile, "here is a friend whom I can trust to the latest moment of my disastrous reign." As he said, he proudly touched the hilt of his sword, and then signified his intention of leaving the castle at midnight. The rest of the day the king ap-

peared in a restless and sombre mood. He paced the hall of the castle, then again mounted the battlements, and cast many a melancholy look on the country round. The Castilian kept constantly at his side, but neither seemed in a mood to exchange words ; both felt the importance of the approaching crisis : and Don Pedro often fixed his keen eyes, that betrayed fearful indications of mental excitement, on his faithful adherent. He appeared impatient for the decisive moment.

At the appointed hour, he put on his armour and left the castle of Montiel, accompanied only by Ferran de Castro, Men de Sanabria, and Diego Gonzalves, his three most devoted partizans. There was something alarming in the king's manner ; he went first, as if impelled by some irresistible impulse, and preserved a disconsolate silence. In this manner they quitted the main portal of the castle ; and passed near the famous startower. The moon shed a flood of radiance on the ancient pile, and brought vividly before the eyes of the cavaliers every surrounding object.

As they came nearer, Don Pedro for a moment checked his horse, and seemed somewhat startled, though the emotion was transitory, and he soon recovered his composure. The cause of his alarm soon became evident ; he had seen over the entrance to the tower, written in large characters, the ominous words—*Esta es la torre de la estrella*.* The prognostics and fearful traditions connected with that awful tower, rushed upon his mind ; but his undaunted energy and noble pride soon steeled him to his purpose, and Don Pedro proceeded on without making any remark on what had affected him. But he soon met with another object, which, under his present circumstances, was calculated to awaken the greatest terror. He heard a sort of exulting cry, and as he turned, he fancied he perceived the ominous old man who had already twice before crossed him in his path. He turned away, with an involuntary shudder, from the haggard and lurid eyes of the visionary : but

* This is the star-tower.

all these presages tended to augment the gloom that hung upon his brow. A party of horsemen now advanced towards them and challenged them to halt.

“Who goes there?” cried the chief—“answer quickly, or look upon your death!”

“Hold! Sir Begue de Villaines,” said Don Men de Sanabria, recognizing that chief and advancing to him: “you are well acquainted with my treaty with Sir Bertrand, to which you gave your free consent. These are Don Pedro and his devoted followers; you cannot mean to play false now, and if such be your real intention, our lives shall not be cheaply purchased.”

“What!” cried the king, in an angry tone—“are we already betrayed? By Santiago, this is somewhat sooner than I expected.”

“No, my liege,” said Men de Sanabria; “I trust the French knight will not turn traitor.”

“No, by my troth,” replied the Begue de Villaines; “that you shall soon find. I mean to act as occasion demands; but not knowing

who the party might be, I was excused in detaining you."

"Sir Bertrand Duguesclin," observed Ferran de Castro—"is, no doubt, in attendance in his tent: be pleased, Sir Knight, to conduct us thither."

"Follow me, and be of good cheer, for every thing is prepared for your reception."

Don Pedro and his attendants obeyed. Slowly, and in silence, they bent their steps to the tent of Duguesclin; an undisturbed tranquillity seemed to prevail around: the soldiers slept in security, and before the tent of the French knight there was only one sentinel to be seen. Don Pedro vaulted unhesitatingly from his horse, and followed the Begue de Villaines into the tent. The three faithful attendants, however, as if actuated by a mournful presentiment, remained on guard at the entrance. But Don Ferran de Castro, when he saw his master enter alone, could not resist a secret impulse to follow him; and, accordingly, requesting his companions to be on

the alert, he proceeded close upon the footsteps of Don Pedro. The tent was only dimly illumined by the light of a single lamp, so that objects were scarcely discernible. At the side of a small table, reclined Sir Bertrand Duguesclin, as if plunged in profound reverie. The arrival of his guest awakened him from his trance, and he advanced towards the king with stately pace, but with much courtesy of manner.

“ Sir Bertrand Duguesclin,” said Don Pedro, in a steady tone, “ behold me in your tent ! The King of Castile trembles at nothing, though by some this act would be considered highly imprudent ; for, in sooth, it much resembles venturing into the lion’s den. I am here, alone ; defenceless, but not afraid. Adhere to your promise ; assist me in this hour of peril, and the dearest object in the world to me : even Don Ferran de Castro will remain as a pledge for the fulfilment of my promises. Soon as I reach Toledo, the two hundred thousand dollars shall be sent to you, and the castles be

delivered up to you which you yourself may select. The night now wears apace; let this transaction be speedily concluded!"

Sir Bertrand spoke not; and the Begue de Villaines approached the extremity of the tent. Don Pedro cast a withering look around, uneasy at the impassive tranquillity of the French knight. After a short pause, Sir Bertrand began: "Don Pedro, the misfortunes which oppress this kingdom must be brought to an end; and you, no doubt, will be ready to make concessions which—"

"Concessions, none!" fiercely cried the king. "None which can be considered unworthy the dignity of my crown. Already I have broadly expressed my sentiments on this head; they are unchangeable, and I marvel, Sir Bertrand, that you should hold such language when I come into your tent with a very different purpose."

"You will consider," returned the French knight, "that you are now at our mercy, and that your cruelties have been such as to justify

any violence offered to your person. The deaths of Blanche, Don Fadrique, and so many other victims—”

“Basta! Sir Bertrand,” cried Don Pedro, impatiently—“I came not here to listen to remonstrances and uncourteous rebukes: I am under no obligation to account for what I may have done in my kingdom. This, however, will I tell you, that the traitorous brother, and the other victims whom you deplore, might have been alive had they not revolted against their king; and as for Blanche, you yourself, Sir Bertrand, and your crew, may claim some part in her death. It was the aid you afforded the rebels that gave them power. Now I charge you, as you are a true knight, to fulfil those promises in virtue of which I have been brought into your presence.”

Don Pedro delivered these words in a manly and resolute tone, and fixing his eyes intently on Sir Bertrand, seemed, by his angry looks, to reproach him with his dilatoriness. At this in-

stant, the canvas that covered the back of the tent was suddenly drawn aside, and a troop of cavaliers, completely armed, entered the place. They were French knights, but Don Pedro appeared in no way disconcerted ; on the contrary, he supposed they had come in order to fulfil their agreement.

“ Now, Sirs,” he said, confidently—“ it is high time for us to depart.” No one uttered a word ; but soon after, a knight detached himself from the rest of the party, and came towards Duguesclin and the Begue de Villaines. It was Trastamara ; but whether from a sensation of terror, or from some other cause, he remained still, and appeared as if rooted to the ground. He cast an anxious look around, and seemed as if he failed to recognize his brother ; so much altered, indeed, did he appear, owing to the misfortunes he had lately endured. Don Pedro, nothing daunted by the sudden appearance of his rival, stood in stern tranquillity, as if awaiting what this visit might portend. It was then

that one of the knights cried out to Trastamara, pointing to the king—"My liege, behold your enemy—and your prisoner!"

Don Pedro cast a ferocious look, and in a threatening and decided voice, "Yes, I am he, I am he!" he cried, at the same time advancing.

Don Enrique sprung upon him, and with a sudden thrust stabbed him in the face with a poignard. The king, with a shout of mingled anguish and indignation, closed upon his rival. They now wrestled with equal animosity, and resolution. It was a terrific sight, an unnatural contest—they were kings and brothers, and the prize of their contest was a throne. A sudden thrill of horror, seemed to deprive the spectators of the power of interference; no one attempted to separate the infuriate foes. Trastamara endeavoured to inflict another wound, but the armour of the king baffled his intention. Besides, he was so closely locked in the fierce embrace of his rival, that he was now obliged to exert every effort to keep his position, so as not to allow him-

self to be overpowered. Meantime the deep gash which he had inflicted on the face of Don Pedro, bled profusely, and it was mournful to behold the two rancorous brothers thus bathed in their common blood. The pain of the wound, and the sense of injury, powerfully seconded the gigantic exertions of the king, although his situation seemed desperate. The faithful Ferran de Castro witnessed the conflict with agony, yet as they were equally matched, and no one of the knights had offered to interfere, a feeling of chivalry prevented him from assisting the king. But the king stood in need of no assistance. After a struggle of a few minutes, he overthrew his rival and fell upon him across a bench.

“Traitor!” he cried fiercely, “I am thy king, and thy superior; yea, even as a man.”

But the attendants now trembled for the consequences; the more so, as Don Pedro, animated by his success, and stung to madness at the sight of the blood that flowed from his wound, had completely mastered Don Enrique. In this

alarming crisis, Sir Bertrand cried out to the by-standers—

“What, Sirs, will you see your master butchered before your eyes? Will you tamely behold the scene, without affording aid to your sovereign?”

The hint was immediately taken, and the Count of Rochebreton, who was the nearest to the prostrate foes, now seized Don Pedro by the legs and turned him over, by which means Trastamara got uppermost, and, in his turn, pinned his foe to the ground. At the same time, Sir Bertrand cried, “I neither make king, nor make king.”

The Castilian, as soon as he beheld this treacherous transaction, drew his weapon, and darted against the Count of Rochebreton; but he was prevented from either assisting the king or wreaking his vengeance upon the Frenchman. The spectators closed upon him, and succeeded in disarming him, but not before he had inflicted a mortal wound on the foremost.

“ Don Men—Don Diego,” he cried, faintly, “ strike for your king !” But those cavaliers had already been secured by numbers, and were prevented from affording any aid.”

Meantime, Don Enrique, with perfect security, plunged again his dagger, already wreaking with gore, into the neck of his unfortunate brother : the blood, black and foaming, spurted violently, and stained his countenance ; while Don Pedro, unable to defend himself, but no ways daunted by this frightful scene, ferociously fixed his eyes upon the fratricide, and in a loud and frenzied voice cried out—

“ Traitorous fiend ! abominable bastard ! this is well, and, more than all, bespeaks thy base and dastard soul. I curse thee, and I despise thee—thou shalt mount my throne, but it is by treachery alone : in open field thou couldst not match me. I die, but I feel one consolation. Ay—I had vanquished thee—I had brought thee to that lowly ground where thy traitorous body ought long since to have been rot-

ting. I fall by treason—the curse of Heaven upon ye ! Undaunted I have lived—and fearless I die. Ferran, my good Castilian, farewell ; and, as thou valuest thy murdered master, never—”

He could speak no more ; a dizziness came over him, and his eyes were covered with the film of death. One strong momentary convulsion shook his frame, and then, uttering a dismal groan, he expired. (2)

Thus ended Don Pedro of Castile, surnamed the Cruel, in the prime of life, not having, as yet, attained his thirty-fifth year. His tragical death seemed, for a moment, to have awed the spectators of the dreadful scene. In sooth, Don Pedro offered a most appalling spectacle ; his ferocious eyes were open, and seemed, even in death, to threaten vengeance against his foes ; his teeth were fiercely clenched—a bitter grin of anger and scorn, sat on his lip, and the clotted gore that defiled his countenance, caused a sensation of pity and horror.

For some moments after this catastrophe, a gloomy silence was preserved. Don Enrique looked aghast, as if overpowered by the fearful deed; and the Castilian, in his grief and indignation, vented his reproaches on an act that, of itself, spoke so eloquently its atrocity.

Soon afterwards, the apartment was thronged with cavaliers. The first sensation of stupor wore away, and the Arragonians and French sent up an exulting shout. This elated Don Enrique, and served to dispel the horror consequent on his unnatural murder. The whole camp was now in commotion, and the magistrates and chiefs began to congratulate themselves on the termination of the struggle, and the accomplishment of their views. The head of Don Pedro was severed from the trunk, and carried in disgusting triumph, affixed to a long pole. In this manner it was promenaded along the camp, amidst shouts of derision from the soldiery and rabble of Montiel, who had now begun to assemble. The day had dawned, and its first rays

illuminated a scene of loathsomeness and horror. With mock solemnity, and amid martial strains, the bleeding trophy was paraded about ; whilst the brother, who had mounted the throne of Castile by trampling in the dust the head of his king, and the adventurous knights who had seconded his treasonable designs, took no measures to impede the disgusting and ungenerous procession. Meantime, the three noble Castilians who had accompanied Don Pedro in his unfortunate egress from the castle, were strongly bound with cords, and confined until some resolution should be taken respecting them.

The castle was again summoned to surrender, and the governor, upon learning the fate of the king, readily obeyed the summons. The garrison laid down their arms. Don Tello de Ramirez, the governor, and the knights who had still remained in the castle, were apprehended and confined, whilst the soldiers were immediately set at liberty, and invited either to join the ranks of

Don Enrique, or depart wherever they should think meet. All the remainder of that eventful day was spent, by the soldiery, in boisterous rejoicing, whilst the news of the event was bruited abroad. A messenger was immediately dispatched, to communicate the same tidings to the chief who continued the siege of Toledo. Don Enrique had resolved to present himself, in person, before that city; though he was assured that no impediment could be offered to his ascending the throne. He knew that, with the death of Don Pedro, all fear and apprehension had terminated; the little popularity of the king, made it obvious that no interest would be excited in the Castilians, to support the rights of his offspring. Besides, the power of Trastamara was now such as to stand in no dread, even if partial attempts should be made in favour of his young nephews. Thus he considered his triumph as secured, and the only thought that now dwelt upon his mind, was, how to decide

upon the fate of the undaunted Castilians, and distribute the promised guerdon to his adherents and allies.

On the very day following that of the death of Don Pedro, the new king, surrounded by his numerous and splendid train, caused the prisoners to be brought before him. The true and generous Castilians came forward without any signs of alarm, but with an unconquerable haughtiness stamped on their noble countenances. They gazed on Don Enrique with fearless intrepidity, as if to defy his vengeance ; but the new king, far from resenting their daring deportment, felt nothing but admiration at this proof of the decision of their character, and had, in his own mind, resolved to spare their lives.

With the death of Don Pedro his thirst of vengeance was completely satiated, and he further reflected, that lenient measures would go far to strengthen his popularity, especially after the disasters and bloodshed which had marked the preceding reign. Indeed, there

were not few amongst the spiteful Arragonians, as well as some of the revolted Castilians, and their allies, who had counselled the death of the faithful knights, by whose spoils they thought to augment the booty of the campaign ; but neither Don Enrique, nor his principal counsellor, Sir Bertrand Duguesclin, were inclined to follow such a course. The sight of Don Ferran de Castro, however, caused a deep feeling of anger amongst all his adversaries, for his devoted attachment to the late king—the uncompromising sternness of his principles, and the death he had inflicted, in defence of his master, when in the tent. All this contributed to excite the most rancorous feeling against the Castilian. Don Enrique thus addressed him and his companions :

“ The wounds of Castile are at length healed, by the death of the tyrant who inflicted them, and whose savage pleasure was to shed the blood of her first nobility, and most pious clergy. Your neglect to attend the call of your suffering country, and, above all, your stubborn defence

of the castle, after our summons, might hold us excused in exercising the utmost severity upon you. But, in ascending the throne of Castile, it certainly is not the intention of Don Enrique to follow the example of his sanguinary predecessor. Castilians—your lives and possessions shall be spared, and you are at liberty, if the presence of Don Enrique is hateful to you, to carry your persons wherever it will suit your pleasure. This indulgence, however, does not extend to Don Ferran de Castro. His noted hatred, his active exertions against us, and above all, the late death of one of our most brave allies—”

“Señor,” proudly interrupted the Castilian, “I thank you humbly for this honourable proof of your hatred; the murder of my king has not changed my sentiments; and the enmity which you suppose I bear your person, is not likely to be softened by the scene I witnessed in the tent of your ally: dispose of me as you will—I am prepared to meet my fate.”

“Proud Castilian,” cried Don Enrique, with emotion, “measure well your words, and consider that you may be pronouncing your own sentence.”

“It is not to me,” replied Ferran, haughtily, “that you should address such threats: you have reason to know me better; but if yet a particle of doubt should delude your mind, in respect to my unalterable sentiments, learn, Don Enrique, that a change of fortune will not make me love the man, whom in adversity I could neither esteem nor pity. In me you behold a relentless enemy; an enemy, who, in descending to that grave which I see now preparing to receive me, carries along with him but one cause of regret.”

“Your unbending spirit,” said Don Enrique, wishing to avoid an explanation of the Castilian’s words, “is, alas! but too well known to us to require additional illustration.”

Yes;” firmly cried Ferran de Castro, still adhering to his purpose, “I only grieve that

the weapon which inflicted its last unerring blow in defence of my king, had not been directed to the heart of Trastamara, instead of the fallen knight."

"My friends, you hear him!" exclaimed Don Enrique, in great agitation; "no friendly efforts on our part can conciliate his stubborn soul, and his last offence merits ——"

"Death!" cried several voices eagerly.

"He will have it so—he precipitates himself upon his own doom," said Don Enrique. "Heaven knows that it is against my inclination that I pronounce his sentence."

"It is, in sooth," replied the Castilian, undauntedly, "a measure of most urgent precaution; for I boldly tell you, Trastamara, that so long as Don Ferran de Castro draws breath, you shall count an irreconcilable enemy in your dominions."

"Heaven bless him!" cried now a voice, broken with emotion, "there spoke a true Castilian, and a doughty knight." Scarcely were

the words uttered, when Pimiento, the good old escudero, threw himself at the feet of his master, and tenderly embraced his knees.

“Ah, Senor!” said the old man, moved to tears, “though your death will make me wretched for the rest of my days, yet I feel a sort of proud joy when I see you marching nobly to meet an honourable doom. I need not recal to your mind the conduct of those gallant knights whose example you have most religiously followed in life; and now it gratifies me much, to see that your death corresponds with the noble acts of your glorious career. Ay, the spirits of Bernardo del Carpio and the Cid, will rejoice to behold the magnanimity of a true Castilian knight.”

“My good escudero,” said Ferran, moved, “rise and adhere to those sentiments, which render you worthy of knighthood. Be of good cheer, and Heaven reward your fidelity. I have no token to leave you, for confiscation must follow my death.”

“Token, Señor,” answered Pimiento, “why speak of tokens? what need of tokens, when I carry with me the proud conviction of having been the escudero of the best Castilian knight of the age?”

“And now, my friend,” said Don Ferran, drawing a deep sigh, “I have but one commission to charge you with. Carry my blessing to *her*, and say, that amidst all his troubles, Ferran had always one tender thought for her, and that thought came more bitterly in this last hour of distress. Farewell.”

Don Enrique then ordered the brave Castilian for immediate execution. Don Ferran fearlessly moved forwards. His companions were powerfully affected; but just as the sentence was about to be enforced, it was suddenly delayed by the entrance of a suppliant. It was a female in deep mourning; a long veil, reaching almost to the ground, concealed her features; but the broken and melancholy sound of her appeal, and the eagerness with which she hastened towards Don

Enrique, clearly bespoke the intensity of her grief.

“Hold!” she cried, in agitation; “delay the sentence but a moment,” and as she said, she sunk before the seat of Don Enrique; the king invited her to rise, and unfold her request.

She obeyed; and with a stately demeanor drew up the veil, and discovered a noble countenance bathed in deep, but dignified sorrow. In the interesting mourner every one recognized Costanza de Vargas. Her beauty shone more touchingly in her sable attire; and the grief which pervaded her features, mellowed into loveliness the slight tint of pride which was habitual to her.

Ferran immediately fixed a melancholy look on his beloved, and stood in breathless expectation for the solution of this mystery.

“My liege,” said Costanza, in a steady but pathetic voice, “I come as the widow of Don Alvar de Lara, to fulfil his dying request. Yes-

terday his spirit took its flight ; but ere he died, he placed in my hands this small token, with earnest injunctions that it should be given to you without delay."

Don Enrique, who had been strongly attached to young Lara, heaved a deep sigh as his death was announced, though he had already been prepared for the catastrophe.

" Ah, Sirs !" he cried, despondingly, " it is distressing that I should have lost so faithful a friend, and so brave a warrior, precisely when I had it in my power to reward his services and attachment. But the will of Heaven be done—we must submit : for it is decreed, that never shall our happiness be complete ; and in my case, I see that eternal truth fully exemplified."

He then took from the mourning lady the packet she presented to him. He broke it open, and read its contents with much agitation. He remained for some time in a thoughtful mood—his contracted brow, and his austere expression

of countenance, clearly indicated that some powerful feeling was at work within his bosom.

“By Heaven and my honour,” he said, at length, after a severe struggle, “I will not gainsay the wishes of my dying friend, however trying the request he addresses to our clemency. Sirs, my good subjects and allies,” he then added, turning to the spectators, “the generous Don Alvar de Lara, by this last pledge of friendship, fervently implores our amnesty in behalf of his rival, Don Ferran de Castro. I will not wrong the spirit of my faithful adherent; and great as the stubbornness of Don Ferran may be, it will surely at length yield willing honour to these proofs of repeated kindness and favour. Don Ferran de Castro! from this moment you are free, and in full possession of your goods and rights as a Castilian knight.”

A shout of approbation answered this announcement, and every one was clamorous in extolling the clemency of the King Don Enrique.

Vivas resounded, and the strains of clarions mingled with the popular cries ; but in the midst of so much excitement, the object of the favour was the only one who appeared insensible of its value. The Castilian alone preserved a profound silence, and, by his haughty looks, testified the little gratitude which he considered due from him to Trastamara. The impression that he had done his duty to the last, dwelt strongly upon his mind; and as by this conduct he did not consider himself liable to punishment, he thought that there was no favour conferred in permitting him to live. His shackles were struck off, and Men de Sanabria, and other Castilians, hastened to embrace him. At this moment Don Egas made his appearance; he approached Don Ferran, and offering his hand—

“Thank Heaven,” he said, with glee, “this is as it should be—the magnanimity of our good king Don Enrique, ensures peace and prosperity to Castile; and this last act of generosity will,

no doubt, gain him the devoted attachment of Don Ferran de Castro."

The Castilian made no reply, and Don Egas, by his looks, evinced his entire disapprobation of such cold and haughty bearing. He was on the point of remonstrating, in an under tone, when the attention of every one was directed towards the king, who again addressed the assemblage.

"I am fully sensible it will be impossible to conquer the pertinacity of Don Ferran de Castro; his hatred to us is too deeply rooted to suffer any kindly feeling to expand in his heart; but we let him, and every other Castilian know, that Don Enrique de Trastamara does not come to force the inclination of his new subjects, but to court them. All those, therefore, who are averse to our government, shall be permitted to retire undisturbed to their seats; or out of our kingdom, if it so pleaseth them. My future conduct will shew whether I am deserving of the crown I have won."

Don Egas then conducted the Castilian to his dwelling, and there, after the many sufferings, the fearful excitement, and the agony into which he had been thrown, by the tragical death of Don Pedro, he received at last the only solace that could heal his lacerated heart. His Costanza, his beloved Costanza was there ; she presented him a note from Don Alvar. The Castilian was deeply moved. It was the prayer of Lara, his once loved friend, and now, by his death, rendered dear again ; he supplicated for pardon, and delicately hinted his wishes for that union which he regretted he had ever prevented. A chaste embrace long held the two lovers on the verge of the purest promised bliss. Nothing now impeded the accomplishment of those vows which the wayward decrees of fate had so often thwarted. A sense of delicacy, however, forbade an immediate performance of the ceremony ; the death of her husband was recent, and until a due time had elapsed, sacred to his memory, Costanza firmly

resolved not to indulge a hope of her own happiness.

The Castilian, as elevated in his sentiments as his bride, acquiesced in the propriety of her opinion. Don Egas now breathed freely once more; he considered all his troubles brought to a conclusion, and the most ambitious anticipation played before his foolish fancy. He flattered himself that the Castilian, after some time, would accommodate himself to the circumstances of the times. In this he was greatly mistaken; not all the remonstrances of Don Egas—not all the brilliant prospects of the new court, could change the fixed, unalterable principles of his unbending soul. He continued always to consider Don Enrique as an usurper and a fratricide. As soon, therefore, as his nuptials with Costanza were celebrated, he imparted to Don Egas his determination of retiring to England, there to end his days in the country of his good friend, Sir John Chandos. The expostulations of his father-in-law were fruitless. Don Men Rodri-

guez de Sanabria offered to bear the Castilian company ; and Don Diego Gonzalez would, no doubt, have followed the example, had he not been prevented by death. The day before his departure, the good old escudero, Pimiento, came with a sorrowful face to his master, to crave that he might not be left behind.

“ Leave you behind ! no,” cried Don Ferran ; “ thou shalt follow me ; not, however, as an esquire, but as a companion, Yes, Pimiento, thou art well deserving the honour of knight-hood, and this reward to thy bravery and fidelity thou shalt receive at my hands.”

It is needless to dwell on the extravagant joy of the old escudero ; the Castilian trembled lest, by wishing to oblige him, he had fairly taken away his wits.

The party departed for England, where they arrived in safety, and were received with that courtesy which distinguished Sir John Chandos and his brother knights. Here we shall leave

the Castilian, without entering into the particulars of his future life. (3)

Don Egas de Vargas, who remained in Spain, became a great favourite at court ; for he could now freely exercise all his talents without danger of making any political mistakes. He did not, however, live as happily as he had anticipated : the absence of his child was a great drawback upon his felicity. Castile was now subject to Don Enrique. Soon after the death of Don Pedro, Toledo surrendered, and all the principal cities in the kingdom joyfully acknowledged the new king. Carmona, indeed, where the sons of Don Pedro resided, made some opposition, which was however overcome. The subsequent feuds, on account of different pretensions to the crown of Castile, are foreign to this work. It will only be necessary to state, in conclusion, that Don Enrique ultimately became firmly seated on the throne, and was not unmindful of lavishing his favours upon his supporters. Indeed, from his prodi-

gality he acquired the title of *El de las Mercedes*. He conferred on Don Bernal, the title and estate of Count Medina Celi, from whom the present dukes of that name claim their descent. Sir Bertrand Duguesclin, and his adventurers, returned to France, charged with spoils which Don Enrique had no little difficulty in conferring, for nothing would satisfy the avarice of his quondam allies. Castile, however, was at length happily rid of them ; and the new king bestowed those largesses and titles, which are to this day known by the name of *Enriqueñas*.*

* Of, or belonging to Henry.



NOTES

TO

THE THIRD VOLUME.

Note (1), page 112.

BERNARDO DEL CARPIO, one of the favourite heroes of Pimiento, was in every respect an extraordinary being. The history of his birth, feats, and death, is the “ne plus ultra” of romance. He was the son of the unfortunate Count Saldaña, and a royal princess, the sister of king Alphonsus the Third, surnamed the *Chaste*. The immaculate monarch, as soon as he discovered the tender frailty of his noble relative, was so exceedingly shocked and scandalized, that he caused the princess to be shut up in a convent, and the count, her lover, in the castle of Luna, there to do penance for their

misdeeds. Bernardo, however, was brought up at the court of his cruel grandfather, but in total ignorance of the circumstances of his birth. He afterwards learned, by means of a duenna, who his parents were, that they had been married in secret, &c. &c., and, finally, that his father still lingered out his wretched existence in a dungeon of the castle of Luna. Bernardo seized the favourable opportunity when he had achieved a victory, to intercede in behalf of his parent. The king most graciously smiled, and declared that Count Saldaña would soon be restored to the anxious arms of his son. Bernardo was duly grateful for this generosity. He soon saw his father; but, alas! the father could not see the son, as he had had his eyes put out, by order of the king, a short time before.

Note (2), page 347.

Both the old chroniclers and more modern historians agree in the principal points relating to the death of Don Pedro, yet a little diversity is to be found in their way of narrating this horrid transaction. Froissart says, that as soon as Don Enrique entered the tent, he exclaimed, "Where is that * * * * that calleth himself king of Castile?" Then king Don Pedro, who was a right hardy and cruel knight, announced himself and said, "Nay, thou art * * *, and I am the son to king Alphonsus," &c. Froissart relates, it was the Viscount of Roquebertin that aided

Don Enrique to get upward, when the brother-foes were wrestling across the bench.

Mariana says, that it was Bertrand Duguesclin himself who lent this helping hand; but whether it was really *he* or Roquebertin, or any other, it matters little. It was an adherent of Trastamara. I have used the name of Rochebreton, whom I suppose to be the same man as Roquebertin.

Note (3), page 365.

It is well authenticated, that after the dreadful fate of Don Pedro, his faithful adherent, Ferran de Castro, withdrew to England, where he died.

The following epitaph was placed over his tomb—

*Aqui yace Don Herrnando de Castro que solo el en
Castilla y Leon fue leal a su rey natural.*

Vide—Gratia Dei.

THE END.

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